

D 202.13:37/3

September 1991



# approach

The Naval Aviation Safety Review





LCdr Dave Parsons

Cdr. John Leenhouts



## From the Editor

"What a great way to fight a war: to simulate fighting it for four months before it starts." —RAdm.(select) Herb Browne, CO, USS *John F. Kennedy* (CV-67).

"When Desert Storm started, only one thing was different (from Desert Shield). The planes launched loaded and came back empty." — Capt. John Warren, Air Boss, USS *John F. Kennedy* (CV-67).

**I**s our training good enough for combat? The unrivaled success of the U.S. forces during the gulf war seems to suggest that it is. Unfortunately great combat training did not stop the normal mishaps that cost lives and aircraft.

Combat losses (aircraft actually shot down) accounted for 57 percent of the total losses during the air war. The balance was attributed to the standard mishap causes: lack of aircrew coordination, loss of situational awareness, poor judgment, supervisory error, and material failure.

It appears we do fight like we train. We still destroy aircraft for the same reasons in war as we do in peace. Arguments can be made that the environment contributed to the non-combat losses; blowing sand, 24-hour operations, and the sheer volume of sorties are to blame. Nevertheless, the fact that nearly half of the air losses were because of mishaps is disconcerting.

Combat missions weren't the only places danger waited. The black deck of the carrier offered its' standard hazards along with a few new tricks just for this gulf cruise.

The accelerated deployment of *Kennedy* and her support ships led to some unusual problems. *Kennedy's* crew and support personnel completed a 30-day load out in five days. The air wing was mobilized and on board the afternoon of the

fifth day. After a month of work-ups were crammed into one week, the carrier steamed toward the Gulf. *Kennedy* was on station 21 days after the first notice to sail.

Although fully equipped for combat operations, *JFK* still had a few problems to deal with. The non-skid on the hangar and flight decks was badly worn.

"Without a good non-skid base, the deck became very hazardous," said Capt. Warren. "The flight deck crews quickly became experts on how to maneuver aircraft and when it was safe to move them. The pilots also got proficient as to how to apply the brakes and apply power when needed so they wouldn't slide."

The lack of combat experience among LSOs also raised some concern. To alleviate the problem the LSOs developed a set of guidelines. "The first initiative was to relax the grading criteria...Moving the wave-off window back reduced the possibility of pilots making a play for the deck, which could result in a mishap," said Lt. Jeff Tuning, wing-qualified LSO. "The need to talk more on the radios was also stressed. LSOs were briefed to intervene earlier in the approach. The air wing boarding rate was excellent, and more importantly, no landing mishaps occurred."

When you read the stories in this issue, you will find that most of the events could happen on any deployment. Fuel planning, headwork, crew coordination, and aircraft emergencies all play parts in the following sea stories. The fact that someone was shooting at the authors just added a little color (NVG green to be precise).

Lt. Steve Halsted

# approach

Vol. 37 No. 3/September 1991



## FEATURES

- Down In Iraq: Lt. Devon Jones' Survival Story** 2  
By Peter Mersky

- Meatball, Lineup, Angle of Attack! That's All You've Got to Do!** 6  
By Capt. Jeff Smiley, USAF

- This Is Gonna Be Great!** 8  
By Lt. Charlie Godinez

- SOP vs. Sea Stories** 10  
By Ltjg. K.G. Boben

- The Russians Are Coming!** 12  
By Lt. Tony B. Onorati

- The Non-skid is Always Thicker Over the Jet Shop** 13  
By LCdr. Gerry Peebles

- Cleared For the Angle** 14  
By Lt. Kevin A. Cory

- I Thought He Had It . . .!** 16  
By LCdr. M.H. McCrabb

- The Myth of Combat Safety Rules** 17  
By AW2 Phillip Morgan

- A Little Reminder** 18  
By Lt. Robert Williams

- The LSO-Proof Aircraft** 20  
Artwork by SN Greg Hervey  
Idea by Lt. Dennis Fitzgerald VF-74

- Wherever You Are . . .** 22  
By Lt. Dean Shults

On the cover:

Corsair Coda: the Changing of the Guard in Light Attack. Painted especially for *Approach* by Morgan I. Wilbur.

*Approach* (ISSN 0570-4979) contents should not be considered directive and may not be construed as incriminating under Art 31 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Views expressed in guest-written articles are not necessarily those of the Naval Safety Center. The Secretary of the Navy has determined that this publication is necessary in the transaction of business required by law. It is funded and printed in accordance with all Navy publishing and printing regulations and approval of the Navy Publications and Printing Policy Committee. Second-Class Postage Paid at Norfolk, Va., and additional mailing office. *Approach* is available for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Approach* Magazine, Naval Safety Center, NAS Norfolk, VA 23511-5796.



see page 2



see page 8



see page 33



see page 38

- Five-Card Draw** 23  
By Lt. Michael Whetstone

- Waveoff, Foul Deck? You've Got To Be Kidding!** 26  
By LCdr. James R. Wyllie

- Lead, Follow or Better Yet, Get Out of the Way!** 28  
By Lt. Kevin Cronin

- A Real Kick: Jet Blast** 29  
By Ltjg. John Gormley

- There's No Tenure Here!** 29  
By Lt. Thomas Marotta

- Between Iraq and a Hard Place** 30  
By Lt. Burke Wellborn

- Horse Pills For Everyone! I'm Buyin'!** 32  
By LCdr. Mark Guadagnini

- My Harley's Last Ride** 33  
By Lt. Tom Dostie

- Bingo Is Bingo** 36  
By Lt. Arnold Selnick

- Night No-Flapper** 38  
By Lt. Mike McMahon

- LSO Career Planning: From Paddles to Fuels Officer** 40  
By Lt. Timmy Smith

## DEPARTMENTS

- Bravo Zulu** 24  
**Brownshoes in Action Comix** IBC

RAdm. J.H. Finney, Commander, Naval Safety Center  
Capt. W.J. Mooberry, Chief of Staff  
Col. W.W. Scheffler, USMC, Director, Aviation Safety Programs  
Cdr. John D. Reid, Head, Media and Educational Support  
Lt. Steve Halsted, Editor  
Peter Mersky, Asst. Editor  
Frank L. Smith, Acting Art Director  
*Approach* is a monthly publication published by the Commander, Naval Safety Center. Address comments, contributions and questions about distribution and reprints to:  
Commander, Naval Safety Center  
NAS Norfolk, VA 23511-5796  
Attention *Approach* - Code 71  
Telephone: Commercial 804-444-7416; Autovon 584-7416

In the meantime, I had seen another farmer's truck coming up the same road toward the blue tank. This guy headed in my direction... right at me. He hadn't seen me, but my heart didn't know that. They drove right past me, about 30-40 yards away, but didn't see me. They would have had to be actually looking for me.



Nobody expects to be shot down, but because of survival training, every aircrewman is better prepared for that possibility, his chances of coming out are high.

Lt. Devon Jones and his RIO, Lt. Larry Slade, manned their F-14B for an escort mission on the fourth day of Desert Storm. This would be the first time that the two VF-103 aviators had crossed the beach. They launched from USS *Saratoga* (CV-60) with their EA-6B and headed for their target where the Prowler crew would shoot a HARM.

# Down In Iraq: Lt. Devon Jones' Survival Story

By Peter Mersky

approach/September 1991



It was still dark when the two aircraft turned away from the target after the Prowler's missile had done its work. The mission had gone well until Lt. Jones and Lt. Slade spotted a SAM coming through the clouds. The pilot added power and turned into the missile which exploded near the Tomcat's tail. The fighter went into a spin as its crew fought to regain control.

By 13,000 feet, both men knew that they would not be able to stop the spin. While both aviators had decided to eject, Lt. Jones pulled the secondary handle first, sending his RIO, then himself, into the cold, black night.

The last time the two men saw each other was before they entered the clouds. Lt. Slade was captured within four hours and interned in Baghdad. He was repatriated at the end of the war.

Lt. Jones, however, was eventually rescued after eight hours on the ground, deep inside enemy territory. What follows is the story of those eight hours.

As he descended in his chute, Lt. Jones tried to pull out his PRC-90. However, because he normally flew without gloves, his hands were cold and he became afraid that he would drop his radio, even though it was tied to his vest. He knew his radio would be a vital survival tool on the ground and he pushed it back into its pocket.

"I had learned," he said, "not to try to make a call in the cold air above 10,000 feet. Wait until you get down to a warmer area, below 8,000 feet."

Lt. Jones landed and after stuffing his chute under his seatpan, took stock of his situation.

"Here I was, down on the ground, inside Iraq. I could see where my Tomcat crashed from the ball of flames. I estimate that I came down 5-8 miles north of the site.

I started walking east. I'd like to say I did that to fool the Iraqis, but it was really out of confusion. (It was the first time I'd been shot down, after all.) Obviously, checking the terrain, looking for my RIO, trying to get him on the radio, in the dark, was confusing. I decided, finally, that it was time to move and I tried to get my bearings.

I looked at the smoke at the crash site. All the winds had been out of the west, so I tried to use the wind direction as a guide. Unfortunately, the winds were from the east. The horizon was only just starting to glow and I couldn't see the sun yet.

So, I began walking toward what I thought was the west. All the briefs told us to walk southwest for SAR, toward the Saudi border. I thought I was moving west, away from the Iraqi airfield we had attacked. As the sun came up, however, I realized my mistake.

I took my helmet off because it had reflective tape, but I couldn't bury it because the ground was so hard. My primary objective was to get as far away from my plane as I could. With the sun coming up, I wasn't thinking rescue, only evasion.



Lt. Larry Slade (l.) and Lt. Devon Jones (r.) back at Oceana.

I used my helmet to "canoe" out some dirt and put dirt around it, ripping the visor off since it would glint in the sun. I knew the Iraqis would find me if they made an effort, but I thought hiding my helmet might buy a little time.

I was also very aware that I was leaving footprints everywhere because of the soft layer of dust over the main hard-packed earth. I could also see fresh footprints and tire tracks, residue from campfires, animal footprints, and debris. I kept looking for places to stop, but there was nothing, no mounds, no hills.

Finally, I came to a little vegetation, small bushes, really, and a few small mounds. I thought the only chance I had was to try to dig into one of those mounds and hide. I walked for two-and-a-half hours before I decided that there was nothing that would help me. I had expected helos to be in the air looking for me, at least by first light. But I hadn't seen or heard anything.

After an hour of laborious digging with his survival knife, he had scooped out a foxhole large enough to hide in. As he settled into his refuge, he saw a small truck approaching a blue, cylindrical tank. Two Iraqi farmers got out but did not see the American. By now it was 1205. He had been down for nearly six hours. He tried his radio again and heard American voices.

To my surprise someone came back with my callsign. "Slate 46, how do you read?" he called.

That was the first time that I knew that there had been an ongoing SAR effort. I started thinking real fast. Anyway, someone started talking to me. I was having reception trouble, mainly range, I guess.

Whenever I thought about the big picture, where I was, it would mortify me. As long as I kept taking it one step at a time, I was OK. It's like a combat mission or flying the ball. If you think about the big picture, if you're scared about getting a no-grade or a waveoff, you're not thinking about the mission or what you need to be doing.

"Let me come a little closer so I can talk to you," he said.

That was a real boost, but, I wondered who was this guy? Did we have Pave-Low-equipped helos out here? Were the SEALs out here?

He got DF cuts on me, using voice counts. I thought he was in the air, but I didn't know what type of airplane or where he was. Suddenly, I heard him.

"OK," he said, "I'll pickle a flare." He asked me where I was relative to my plane's crash site. Of course, this was after we'd gone through our authentication procedures. Everyone asks me if I cross-authenticated him. No! I dare anyone else to have enough presence of mind to do that. What would I say? "No, don't come and get me!" I'd rather sit out here and starve to death, or maybe become a POW."

He was coming north. "Look to your south," he told me. "I'll pickle a flare."

"I understand you're a helicopter," I said, trying to find

out what type of plane he was.

"Negative," he said quickly. "I'm at 18,000 feet." Who would be way up there, I thought? He pickled the flare but I couldn't see him. He passed me, heading north, and shot off another flare. This time I saw it.

"OK, now, I'll come down to where you can see me," he said. Lo and behold, he was an A-10!

He was Sandy 57, like those guys in Vietnam, trained in combat SAR. I brought him in with standard aviator talk. He didn't see me, but he flew right over me at 50-100 feet and dropped a waypoint in his INS.

"I've got to get some gas," he called. "Minimize your transmissions and come back up in 30 minutes." He headed south to the tanker track just south of the border. I found out later that he was also talking to the helicopters. They had been up from 0600-0900 looking for us, but had given up because it was getting too bright.

The Sandy pilot directed the helicopters toward Lt. Jones. As the SAR force headed for the downed Naval Aviator, they heard MiGs being vectored toward them. An F-15 RESCAP chased the threat away. After they got their gas, the A-10s returned, caught up with the helos and brought them in.

In the meantime, I had seen another farmer's truck



Capt. Rebecca Colaw, USAF



The two A-10 Sandy pilots who located Lt. Jones and guided MH-53Js of the 20th SOS to him. Capt. Paul Johnson (r.) and Capt. Randy Goff (l.) were from the 354th TFW. Capt. Johnson received the Air Force Cross and Capt. Goff, the DFC.

headed in my direction, right at me. He hadn't seen me, but my heart didn't know that. They drove right past me, about 30-40 yards away, but didn't see me. They would have had to be actually looking for me.

As the truck went over the horizon, I heard the A-10s talking to the helicopters telling them they had another 30 miles to my position. The helos were actually on the ground, waiting for the Sandys to clear the way for them.

They asked me to shine my signal mirror south, which I did, but they didn't see it. Then, one of the A-10s told me to start looking for a helo about 15 miles out. As I looked south at standard helo altitudes—maybe 500 feet—I couldn't see them. But I did get a tally on the A-10s flying in a circle. I talked them in.

I had made a mistake earlier when I first contacted the Sandys. They asked me where I was relative to my plane's crash site.

"About 8-10 miles north," I replied. "About 1,000 yards due east of a blue tank." The Iraqis must have been listening to our transmissions, and, of course, they must have known where the tank was.

So, as the planes came in, and everything seemed to be heading to a big crescendo, about half a mile down the south road, I spotted a truck, an army truck, with the canvas

covers—a grunt truck. I think we all saw it at the same time because the A-10 called, "We've got a fast mover on the dirt road." This guy was boresighting right at me, down in my hole. I saw a lot of dust and I thought I actually saw two trucks. We'll have to figure that out later.

I had a moment of panic there. But, hey—the A-10s have those huge cannons, and the helos must have .50-cal. Within 3-4 seconds, the Sandys set up a squirrel cage and rolled in on the truck, maybe 100 feet AGL, 200 feet slant range. They opened up with their 30-mike-mike. By the time they finished there was nothing out there, just flames and dust, about 100 yards from me. For the first time, I looked to the east and saw a helicopter, about five feet off the ground, watching the A-10s. I started talking to him. I had never seen such a beautiful sight as that big, brown American H-53.

He got about 50 yards away from me and I popped out of my hole for the first time. I grabbed my kneeboard cards and gear as he landed about 20 yards away. One of the special forces guys jumped out and waved me on. I jumped in and off we went, 140 miles to go at 140 knots, at 20 feet! Pretty impressive machine. Just what you'd expect from these special forces people with lots of guns hanging off them. As I looked out the back for first time, 20-30 miles to the south, I saw the second helo. They had been flying cover for each other. Big spines on these guys, I'll tell you, being 150 miles into enemy territory during the day, in a helicopter.

After a brief medical exam at a forward base in Saudi Arabia, Lt. Jones got some food and tried to get a little sleep. However, a SCUD alert roused him out of bed soon after he

closed his eyes. The next day, an S-3 from his carrier flew him back to his squadron. Following a three-day rest, he returned to the cockpit.

Lt. Jones commented on his survival training.

There was a lot of luck, divine intervention, whatever. There's no way you can put Naval Aviators through SERE training, then dump them in a

dirt parking lot, and expect them to evade without a little luck. An Iraqi helo could have just gone up and down on one-mile legs and found me—if they had made an effort, or perhaps, after picking up my RIO, realized that he came from a two-man plane. It wouldn't have taken them more than two hours.

My training at SERE School, though, helped me. My brain was going a mile a minute sometimes, but occasionally something would creep in from my training like, "Don't die of thirst with water in your canteens," or "Don't leave footprints."

The only equipment I didn't need or use was night stuff—lights and signal flares. I used my knife, signal mirror, water, and radio. Of course, you're never totally prepared for an experience like this. But, I think the Navy did as much as it could to train me.





J03 Oscar Scasa

# Meatball, Lineup, Angle of Attack! That's All You've Got to Do!

By Capt. Jeff Smiley, USAF



When I was eight years old, I sent for information to the Air Force and the Navy. The Navy sent me a copy of *Wings Over the Fleet*. The front cover showed USS *Enterprise* and the back cover had a closeup of a pilot and BN in their A-6. The booklet was my most prized possession and reinforced my desire to fly jet fighters some day.

The choice was made easier when the Navy said, "No way. You wear glasses." The Air Force granted me a waiver. Since then, I've flown F-16s in three fighter wings and graduated from the USAF Fighter Weapons School. Last year I applied for and received orders to fly the F/A-18 Hornet in a Navy fleet squadron. It was a dream come true. What follows is my experience during my first CQ.

Meatball, lineup, angle of attack, that's all you have to do. It sounds so simple, but boy, those who have done it know it isn't. It was completely foreign to me. After 10 years of landing high-performance aircraft on a 10,000-foot by 200-foot runway, landing on a 700-foot by 75-foot landing area seemed almost impossible. The RAG had been pretty normal up to CQ; air-to-air, air-to-ground, aerial refueling, just learning how to do the same things in a different aircraft.

That all changed during my first CQ. I couldn't have had three better LSOs. They listened to some of the most stupid question ever asked by a fledgling aviator. We spent hours talking about ball flying. For three weeks, 24 hours a day, I flew the ball. I flew it in the simulator, during bounce periods, during family meals and in my dreams.

I had three weeks to learn a trade that takes two years to teach to naval aviators. I don't think I have ever worked harder at anything than I did trying to learn how to land onboard a boat.

Pulling the throttles to idle and flaring were two of the bad habits I had to break. Flying an angle of attack instead of an airspeed, and landing the jet at a 700-fpm rate-of-descent were two of the subtle things I had to learn.

I slept with CV NATOPS every night. Any simulator that wasn't scheduled seemed to have me in it. The name of the game was practice, practice, practice. Although the challenge was difficult, it was also fun. I knew I was about to try

PHC Denis Kesko





something every aviator dreams of doing.

I wasn't nervous when I got up that morning of my CQ, but by the time I finished my preflight I felt like I had a bowling ball in my gut. I was ready for the challenge but it was a challenge of the unknown. I had never seen a carrier, let alone landed on one, and it left me just a little apprehensive.

The flight out to the ship went OK. I got my first look at the ship during the break. My first impression was how small the ship looked. I put the fear behind me and did what I had been taught for three weeks.

All the guys in my class told me, "Real aviators don't lock their harness." So I didn't. What a mistake. I rolled into the groove, flew the ball, got the 3-wire, and my head promptly touched the horizontal indicator between my legs with the throttles in full burner. I sat there for about five seconds unable to move.

Then a calm voice came over the radio saying, "We gotcha. You can pull the throttles back." I did and finally looked up and saw the carrier close up for the first time.

I quickly tried to reconfigure my plane for takeoff, roger the weight board and follow the impatient signals from the yellowshirt. My cup was rapidly

filling up. Somehow I managed to do it all right and blasted off the front end to do the whole terrifying thing five more times. The rest of the day was uneventful by comparison and I got ready for the most difficult challenge of all: night carrier qualification.

Flying around the boat at night has to be the hardest flying I have ever done. The day traps are actually fun; night traps are all work. The first night I spent more than 50 percent of the time telling myself I could do it, I could do it. While preparing for the first cat shot, I couldn't get over how dark it was out there. The cat shot was absolutely terrifying and it didn't get any easier the rest of the night. I held on for dear life and tried to enjoy the ride.

Lineup became a much more difficult problem. As usual, there were no needles or bullseye, and only an intermittent TACAN. The visual cues were all gone and the ball became my best friend. Hearing the "Roger, ball" call comforted me. At least I was close to where I was supposed to be or everyone would be yelling at me by now. The night went as planned until the last trap.

During the day, I had developed a habit of using the afterburner after touchdown. The Air Boss sent a message to our ready room asking us to watch using

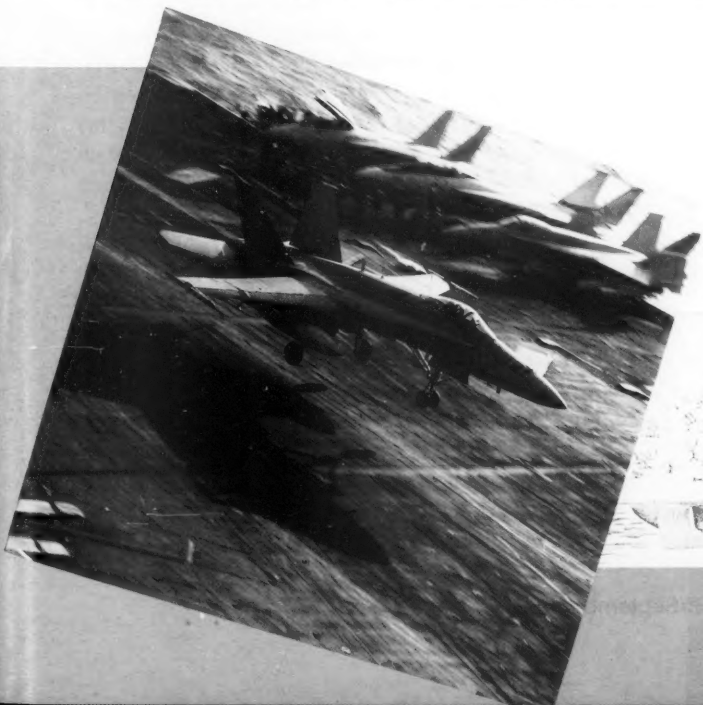
burner in the wires. After my third night trap someone came over the radio and said, "Watch the power in the wires." As only an Air Force pilot would, I thought he meant I was in burner again. So I thought, "I'll show him the next time."

Trying to be extra careful, I did a little searching for the mil-power stop. Immediately I heard the same voice, this time screaming, "Power in the wires!" Thinking I was in burner, I pulled the power even further back and by the time I came to a stop everyone was screaming.

I got out of the jet still unaware of my mistake until I walked into the ready room and looked at the LSOs. They took me into a corner like a father takes his son to the shed. I knew it wasn't going to be pretty. I told them my story and what I thought had happened. Then, they told me what *really* happened. It's funny now but it wasn't funny then. The rest of the CQ went smoothly.

I look back on the CQ as one of my proudest accomplishments. I'll never forget how I felt after my last night trap. By the way, I still have that *Wings Over the Fleet* booklet, but I also have a new prized possession: the hook point from my first day trap which Cdr. Dave Park, who led the CQ, gave me. Thanks DCAG!

Capt. Smiley flew F-16s before becoming an exchange pilot with VFA-131.



# This Is Gonna Be Great!

By Lt. Charlie Godinez

**W**ith Desert Storm fast approaching, and visions of combat dancing in our heads, we ASW warriors from the HS community got rid of "all that sonar gear" and set our minds to our fast-growing secondary mission, combat SAR. Yeah, now *that's* something that's flashy, new and exciting – alien concepts to an H-3 driver. The heck with hunting for *Red October*; let's get out there and git some!

Wait! How ready are we for this? Training plan, check. CSAR exercises and training dets accomplished, check. Low-level navigation and desert flying, check. (Those camels won't bother us again.) High-tech nav gear and CSAR equipment installed, M-60s for the AWs to play with, check. Day and night DLQs, check.

Proficiency...well, there'll be time for that later, right?

We took an aggressive approach to preparing ourselves for CSAR operation so that we'd be ready when the fight started. And start it did. Was that a TLAM shot I just heard? Let's review the checklist. What was that last item about DLQ proficiency? Never mind that now. Let's get going, besides we've all got at least an initial qual. I got a few night bounces about a month ago and *greased 'em*.

Our third night on the small deck. The war's in full swing and our combat-ready Sea Kings are holding up fine. We have the night mission. We have two experienced crewmen, a top-notch O-4 (who, by the way, is letting me brief the hop and fly right seat), and me, the coolest helo jockey to ever surf the front side of the power curve. This is gonna be great.

OK, let's get a thorough brief, where we're going, what we're doing. Keep a respectable distance from the



SAM envelope and well clear of any patrol boats. Any questions? Let's walk. Oh, yeah. The landing. No problem. It's an angled approach but I'm good at those. Just did a nice one last night. Let's do it!

The gear's on, the gun's loaded, and we head out to the helo deck. Man, it's dark out here. At least the plane's preflighted. Off we go. Nice takeoff. Good climbout, safe airspeed, aircraft's solid. Hey, Left Seat, tune up some of that nifty James Bond nav gear and let's figure out where we are. (Where's that moon that was out last night?)

What! What do you mean the GPS isn't working. It's gotta work. Oh, well, at least we still have the TACNAV. Hmm-m, "serious system error." What does that mean?

Hey, we've just broken lock. OK, my fun meter's seriously dropping off now. Fat, dumb and happy is no way to spend the war. Let's get hold of Freddie. Time for pigeons home. This hop is over. Wrong!

All right, Freddie's got us and we're inbound. Five miles out, landing checks. Tower, put the lights on. Oh, they're on already. OK, then, keep on truckin'. Three miles now. Where's the boat? Two miles, got something at 12 o'clock. OK, we've got the deck. It sure looked bigger when we left.

"I'm left of lineup," I tell my copilot.

"You're right of lineup," he replies.

"Good lineup, sir!" calls the first crewman.

A little perception problem, tonight, eh? Well, we'll get a better picture closer in. Now where's that GSI? Hey, Left Seat, you got the GSI? Oh, that's right, it's down. Didn't we cover that in the brief? Geez, this is gonna be a little tougher than I thought.

A little tougher? Here's where I let us get set up. Dark night, small deck, no good feel for lineup, and no glideslope indicator. We all had our eyes outside the cockpit, trying to get a better look at the deck as the boat got closer. The next call I hear from the left seat is, "Altitude! Altitude!"

A quick scan of the radalt shows me at 20 feet, heading for 15 feet. On the gauges, level the wings, pull in the power, we're outta here.

"Tower, 613's a waveoff," I call. Whew! That was close. Let's re-think this. On downwind now. We briefed every portion – almost – of this approach, altitude assignments, airspeed reductions. I'm a lot calmer than I had a right to be but that won't last long. OK, roll final once again, and once again the ICS calls start.

"You're left," says Left Seat.

"You're right," says the first crewman.

"I'm right on," I reply.

Geez, not again. Pressing carefully on, the approach is going a lot more smoothly. I work my way down to a comfortable position off the fantail. Creep it over the deck, slowly ease down my altitude. The first crewman calls me high and right. I listen for the drift calls, make the corrections, get one "Cleared to land" call, and start down.

Everything seems fine until, again, I get the "Altitude! Altitude!" call. This time, however, it comes from the first crewman. Now what?

I pull in the collective (what was that clunk?), reset my hover, and creep it a tad more forward.

"Cleared to land," the ships says again.

I'm aggravated now, and I spout off to the first crewman, "What was that clunk?"

"Let's get it on deck first, sir."

He's right. I set it down, shut down and walk out to check the BDA. Cost of this hop: one tailwheel locking pin, one gouged tailwheel tire, one shattered ego. Gee,

the scissor strut sure looks funny 180 degrees out like that.

Quoth the first crew, "It coulda been worse." He's right about that, too.

I never said, "It can't happen to me," but I remember saying, "It won't."

Never take a small-deck landing for granted. The CO was waiting for me as I was shakily checking out my injured bird. I expected to get canned, but he simply reminded me, "Night DLQs are the most demanding things we do." I won't forget that soon.

I learned that I wasn't as good as I thought I was. I remember saying on several occasions how I "preferred" the angled-deck approach as if I had the experience to compare. I even had the audacity to tell someone I was "good" at them. With barely two months of HAC time and less than a dozen night DLQs, I just didn't have the credentials for that kind of talk.

There were some positive aspects to that lousy night on the smallboy. First and foremost, four dry flightsuits. Second, an experienced HAC in the left seat kept us out of the water. Third, I had a level-headed first crewman who knew enough to remind me that a night hover over a small deck is no place to get irritated over what you may have done to the aircraft.

Lt. Godinez is an H-3 pilot with HS-12.

9



# SOP vs. Sea Stories

By Ltjg. K.G. Boben

*I felt like a blowtorch had hit me as I scrambled to keep my balance while being blown across the flight deck.*

10 **The** cruise-turnaround schedule had begun. As I sat in my ready room wearing my flash hood and gloves, I looked at all the new faces in the squadron. They were all hard-chargers, but some would invariably make mistakes. I wondered how I could keep them from making the same mistakes that I and others have made. I decided to share some sea stories; everyone relates to them.

Looking back over my last cruise, I had many experiences to tell. One day, we were a couple of days away from the P.I. on a night AIC hop. We were a month into the cruise and I was starting to feel salty with more than 100 hours in the plane since joining the squadron three months earlier. I established a comfortable routine of briefing, grabbing a quick meal and heading off for a thorough preflight.

Nothing extraordinary occurred during the flight. I had controlled three Tomcats in a 2 v 1 during the

cycle and afterward, we had all headed for the ship. As we approached marshal, something strange happened: the Boss called us down first. We were to do a hot-pump-crew-switch. I was thrilled. No 45-minute wait while we listened to everyone else get aboard.

The approach was no different from any other as I peered out of the RO's window at the right nacelle and the moonlit water. A second after I saw the deck I felt the reassuring tug of the 3-wire. The pilots started their commentary as we taxied off the angle deck. During the crew swap, the mission commander was concerned about my safety, but I had some experience and wasn't worried about it.

The pilots told us we were chocked and chained just aft of the JBDs for cats 1 and 2. Usually E-2s are parked in the "Hummer hole," aft of the island. As the main entrance hatch swung open, the ACO, copilot

and I headed for the door. The CICO and pilot stayed behind, as usual, for a face-to-face brief with the oncoming crew.

As the RO, I reached the main entrance hatch first only to find that there was no maintenance person to guide us out. I stood on the steps with the port engine spinning its blades at 1,100 rpm only a couple of feet to my right. The engine's roar and the prop's slipstream added to my confusion about where I was and what I should do. I quickly decided to use the standard procedure and head aft along the fuselage until I could touch the tire. Then I would duck under the nacelle and walk out the wing line. Figuring if I could make it to the troops forming the safety chain around the spinning prop, all would be fine.

As I headed for a trooper, he signalled behind himself with his flashlight toward what looked to be an unmanned F-14. I thought he was



showing me the way to safety and I headed in that direction. I felt like a blowtorch had hit me as I scrambled to keep my balance while being blown across the flight deck.

I had never thought that all the aircraft around us were turning for the launch until I was headed toward two A-6s. I fell to all fours to get my balance; a yellow-shirt helped me up, with nothing bruised but my pride and confidence.

He led me out of danger toward

the island. I made it back to the ready room. I was shaken and it took a while before I could calmly sit back and analyze what had happened.

The darkness took away all my visual cues. We were parked in an unusual spot, and I didn't expect the other aircraft to be turning. Most importantly, there were no maintenance troops around the door to point me in the right direction. Was it their fault? No, the SOP addresses the situation and I shouldn't have left the aircraft

without someone at the door.

If I had read the SOP I would have known that. However, when I checked into the squadron and asked a fellow JO about getting a copy of the SOP, he said the updated version was on the CO's desk waiting to go smooth. Besides, it was just like the RAG's SOP, he said. Accepting that bit of bad gouge nearly killed me.

Listening to sea stories is a great way for new guys to get information. So is reading the SOP. ◀

Ltjg. Boben is an NFO with VAW-116.

PH2 James Brown



# The RUSSIANS Are Coming!

By Lt. Tony B. Onorati

It's a beautiful night for your SSC mission. The moon is full and the shadow of your jet is clearly visible on the flight deck as you taxi to the cat.

"Night traps on a night like this are almost enjoyable," you think as you unfold the wings. As your nosewheel drops over the shuttle, the right generator kicks off line, your platform dumps, and you can't reset it. Your mind races through your options. You really want to go flying, but NATOPS and your squadron's SOP say otherwise.

The decision has already been made, so you say a quick prayer, try once more—unsuccessfully—to reset the generator, and sadly call the Boss to tell him you're down.

A golden opportunity to bag a "day" trap at night has passed and your roommate, who is already three traps ahead of you, launches in the spare. You know you made the only correct decision but that doesn't make you feel any better. You remember something from a salty instructor who said, "Unless the Russians are parked at the approach end of the runway, it's not worth taking a bad jet flying."

12

What if it's the Iraqis in Kuwait? I faced a similar situation except that I had 12 Rockeye hanging on my jet. My reasons for wanting to fly were different and far more pressing than bagging an easy night trap. The decision to abort was one of the toughest I have had to make in my aviation career.

Taking the jet flying with one generator would have resulted in losing key cockpit components that were essential in combat, and perhaps the loss of an aircraft and crew. The spare launched in my place and I lost out on a combat sortie. However, my plane was fixed and launched on the next cycle, and I was around to fight another day.

In our environment, the decision to take a down aircraft flying would be unacceptable and potentially disastrous. Fortunately, that decision was taken out of my hands by a thorough brief on no-go contingencies. I am happy to say that the sometimes-cumbersome peacetime safety rules that we aviators live by did not go away in combat.

The missions became somewhat routine and the days were long, but the peacetime attitude regarding safety in training flights carried our air wing through the arduous 43 days of combat.

Some day, when I become a salty instructor, my motto will be: It is *never* acceptable to take a bad jet, *especially* when the Russians are coming. ◀

Lt. Onorati is an A-6 pilot with VA-145.



PH2 Charles Moore

*I am happy to say that the sometimes-cumbersome peacetime safety rules that we aviators live by did not go away in combat.*

# The Non-skid is Always Thicker Over the Jet Shop

By LCdr. Gerry Peebles

AT the age of 10 I felt in my heart that this year would never exist. In my wildest dreams, I could not imagine myself as a gray-haired, 34-year-old LSO contemplating the yeas and nays of eight years in the controlled crash observation business.

There are a few philosophical aspects to waving which, if better understood by those not directly involved, could shed a great deal of light several dark corners throughout our modern Navy.

**The Lens.** The Fresnel lens, in all its shining glory, is a fallible instrument. It has definite limits in its operational envelope which must be monitored and evaluated by those "in the know": LSOs and air department personnel qualified to do so. There are times when Fresnel lenses experience electrical, mechanical or stabilization failure rendering the system useless. Hesitation in rigging the MOVLAS when indicated can have catastrophic

consequences (not to mention the incidental wear and tear to the LSO safety nets).

**Lens Hype.** This is a condition in which the air wing pilots and NFOs make erroneous assumptions based on isolated cases of mistaken meat-ball color and location. The local rumor control officer can quickly produce large amounts of lens hype if not expeditiously pounced upon by the CAG LSO brandishing a wild hose or other suitable instrument.

**The Glide Slope.** A burning question in the minds of nuggets throughout the naval establishment is, "How does the LSO *know* exactly where the glide slope is?" The answer is that after watching thousands and thousands (and a few more thousands) of aircraft scratching, clawing and flailing their way to the proper glide slope, one acquires the ability to quickly figure out where they all want to be, even if the basic glide slope angle has changed. Eyeball calibration becomes extremely accurate so long as environmental factors such as visibility and horizon remain reasonable. I compare this principle with the observation of a column of ants on the ground. It doesn't take very long to figure out where the trail is if you watch them for about five to 10 seconds.

**Lineup Control.** To quell the rising tide of misconception among junior aviators, I submit that the pilot of an aircraft crossing the ramp of a carrier at sea holds the responsibility for placing the machine on centerline. When the pilot fails to meet that responsibility, the LSO emits sounds which produce a preconditioned response by the pilot, aiding in his lineup control. The notion that "Paddles will keep me on centerline" is foolish at best.

**Standard vs. Non-standard.** A popular means of fault-finding in recent years has dealt with the advent of non-standard LSO calls. Such calls are necessary in our business to ensure proper response by pilots committing various atrocities in-close to at-the-ramp. In the finest traditions of Pavlov, pilots are trained, grilled, tested and retested on the proper responses to certain sounds. For instance, the word "sliders" or "autodog" produces *instantaneous* salivation. All that aside, the so-called nonstandard call has a definite place in the LSO bag of tricks on a dark night. One can picture the moon setting over raging seas on the far horizon. The radio crackles "ninety-nine, the ship is in a starboard turn. New expected possible final bearing might be..." The bottom line is that *every* situation cannot be covered in recipe fashion in a yearly changing Blue Book.

**Aircraft vs. People.** What are we waving? Aircraft or people or both? The LSOs on the platform in the situation described in the paragraph above *must* know who they can expect to see fencing with the three-wire. The LSOs in *any* air wing become very familiar with each pilot's habits in the groove. These range from the "totally unpredictable" types to the "Rock of Gibraltar" types. Simply knowing that a pilot is unpredictable is in itself a useful bit of information. On the other hand, even the Rock of Gibraltar can sink to new depths unexpectedly. LSOs don't forget to wave the aircraft, too!

"Commander Steelnerves would never do that..."  
What's that? *Another* gray hair, Paddles? ◀

LCdr. Peebles was CVW-15 LSO, serving TAD as VA-52 Aviation Safety Officer for the Knight-riders aboard USS Vinson (CVN-70) when he wrote this article.

13



# Cleared For the Angle?

By Lt. Kevin A. Cory

PHAN Sean D. Flynn

**"615**, the winds are 345 at 10. You're cleared to lift on the LSE's signal."

Thirty seconds later, we were off the deck heading for starboard delta. It was only my fifth flight with the squadron and my first flight with this particular HAC. He was a senior lieutenant nearing the end of his tour and I felt comfortable with him in charge. The sun was shining and the temperature was a reasonable 80 degrees.

I gave our "off call" to departure and completed the post-takeoff checks. I eased back in my seat and marveled at the surroundings.

"So this is carrier aviation," I thought as we turned inbound on 045 degrees relative.

Our assigned event was a plane-guard/ASW training

mission. A note in the ADB asked us to make an IFE on the coupler-doppler system to ensure the helicopter could hold a stable, coupled hover. Once we burned down to 3,000 pounds of fuel, we completed the alternate approach checklist and began our first coupled approach.

The system met all the parameters and it held a fairly stable hover. We noted a problem with the heading hold, though. Gas generator speed was 95 percent for both engines. Turbine inlet temperature was 620 degrees C. for both engines, and the torque was matched at 72 percent. After 10 minutes, we departed the hover and tried to troubleshoot the heading hold. All gauges checked normal and we didn't see any buildup of salt spray on our windshield.



# The HAC called the tower and declared an emergency. The Air Boss made the deck ready and announced, "615, the winds are 345 degrees at 10. You're cleared for the angle."

Having completed our evaluation, we departed the hover and went back to starboard delta to cover the launch-and-recovery cycle. We were flying at 150 feet and 80 knots in a slight port turn when suddenly... *bang!* We felt and heard the jolt coming from the aircraft's port side. I quickly checked the engine instruments, which all indicated normal. What was it, then?

The HAC responded, "Check your side and see if any of the doors or panels have fallen off." It didn't look like the transmission door had come open.

"No, the transmission door is still in place," I said, then... *bang!* Again, I checked the instruments, but they were still indicating normal.

By now my palms were sweating and my heartbeat was ringing in my ears.

I positioned my mirror to check the engine-compartment door. Perhaps... *bang!* This time, the T5 shot up to 800 degrees C on the no. 1 engine, NG dropped, and there was a large split in torque.

"Speed selectors full forward," the HAC yelled, and I slammed both selectors forward. The compressor stalled again and the T5 rose to 900 degrees C.

The HAC completed the remaining boldface memory items from the emergency checklist and asked me to break it out to do the remaining checklist.

I complied and began to retard the no. 1 speed selector to ground idle. The compressor stalled again and T5 rose toward 950 degrees. The HAC immediately grabbed the No. 1 speed selector and secured the engine. I completed the checklist, including securing the no. 1 engine. We both took deep breaths and turned toward the ship.

The HAC called the tower and declared an emergency. The Air Boss made the deck ready and announced, "615, the winds are 345 degrees at 10. You're cleared for the angle."

We set up for a long approach and discussed what point on the deck we should try to make our running landing to. I completed the landing checks and cinched my harness tight.

The HAC and I talked about trying to restart the engine, but he decided against it because of possible damage to the engine. At this point, we realized that we would not be able to fold the blades once we were on deck. We told the Boss and asked him to tell our Maintenance Control to have the emergency blade-fold unit standing by.

At half a mile we were all set to land at the 3-wire. At a quarter mile, an F/A-18 began to pull out onto the ramp right in front of us!

"Tower, 615 is waving off port side."

The Boss told us to go around the Hornet and land forward on the angle. The HAC reminded him that he had cleared us for the angle and that a single-engine approach would require a run-on landing. We made a textbook single-engine waveoff and took it around. The Boss cleared the Hornet from the ramp and we made a run-on landing that would have landed us safely onboard a *Ticonderoga*-class cruiser.

As it turned out, we could have probably made a hover landing. Our weight combined with the winds would have given us the power available to do what the Boss initially expected. However, we decided that it would not have been prudent. This incident gave me a lot of valuable experience and showed me how I would respond under pressure. I was pleased with my performance but there was plenty of room for improvement.

My training had emphasized the usual priorities – aviating, navigating and communicating – and now I understand the importance of that sequence. I saw firsthand how important checklists are, and, more importantly, I learned the need to stick to your guns where safety of flight is concerned. The Air Boss can be intimidating. In this instance, we kept to our plan which coincided with what we had practiced during many NATOPS checkrides. It also would have helped us if the people making the decisions had a better understanding of our helo's capabilities. ◀

Lt. Cory is an H-3 pilot with HS-8

*The HAC responded,  
"Check your side and see  
if any of the doors or  
panels have fallen off."*

# I Thought HE Had It...!



By LCdr. M.H. McCrabb

It wasn't the darkest night I had even flown in, but the moon had disappeared and there was no horizon anywhere. Our destroyer was involved in a summer bilateral exercise brimming with ASW opportunities. One summer night we were tasked with keeping an eye out behind the force during an opposed unrep.

Sure enough, our radar picked up a contact that disappeared and was quickly converted into a MAD-acoustic contact. As we continued the prosecution, a foreign P-3 joined us at his assigned altitude of 1,000 feet. We maintained 400 feet. Both aircraft were under the control of a non-U.S. ship in company with the unrep group now 15 miles away.

PH2 Rory Knepp



When the P-3 asked for a lower altitude for an attack run, I proposed swapping altitudes while we kept each other in sight. Simple enough. Both the P-3 and the controlling ship agreed and I announced our intentions as we climbed to 1,000 feet. Ten minutes later, while we watched the P-3—he seemed a couple of miles away—he seemed to be closing without any bearing drift. The closer we got, the less comfortable I felt with our vertical separation and I began a climbing left turn. It wasn't enough.

Seconds later, we ended up in a 60-degree bank with an armful of collective as the P-3, in a left turn as well, passed within 100 feet vertically and 200 feet laterally.

We were angry and confused, but somehow we kept contact with our sub until it was time to RTB. On the way back to the ship, I thought about writing a zinger to those guys who had tried to ruin my evening.

A two-day cooling-off period toned my message down somewhat, but it was only a matter of hours before the P-3 crew responded. It was amazing how much miscommunication had taken place in one transmission despite speaking the same language.

As far as the P-3 crew was concerned, they had interpreted our clearance to include 400 through 1,000 feet. In fact, they had never left 1,000 feet while waiting for us to clear 400 feet.

They never heard my call to climb and couldn't understand how I had reached 1,000 feet. Without a horizon,

it was nearly impossible for us to judge our lateral separation—or lack thereof—until we were almost on top of each other. In typical ASW aviator fashion, we had given the ship's air controller the impression that we had taken over the ASW and safety-of-flight responsibilities since we had not heard anything from him during the 10 minutes before the incident.

The rules for this bilateral exercise were perfectly clear and understood by both aircrews. Yet the mishap investigation would have certainly listed "failure to maintain assigned altitude" as one of the primary cause factors, and the board would have been correct. But who had failed to keep their assigned altitude? Or would it more appropriate to point the finger at the ship's air controller who was originally tasked with the responsibility?



Fixing the blame isn't the most important point here. I could have been 100 percent right and 100 percent dead. This was a case of three players saying, "I thought he had it," resulting in a completely avoidable situation becoming a barely avoided mishap. (See "Brownshoes in Action" for May 1989.) If we hadn't kept our heads out of the cockpit, this would have been a mishap report instead of an *Approach* article.

LCdr. McCrabb flies with HSL-37.

**E**ver since I was a clueless airman, gingerly taking my first steps on a flight line, I have had training in flight line and flight deck safety.

My senior petty officers always harped on the importance of protecting my eyes and ears, wearing long sleeves, and keeping my head on a swivel. If you combine that training with a little common sense, you can work the flight line without fear.

On my recent deployment as part of a Lamps Mk. III team, embarked in an Aegis-class cruiser in the Arabian Gulf during Desert Storm, I was shocked at the lack of flight-deck safety. I had always heard that rules get thrown out during war, but I didn't believe it. Our diverse missions carried us to various flight lines and flight decks, and I saw that many of my compatriots chose to ignore the rules. They forgot the most basic aviation safety rules and put themselves squarely in the mishaps-waiting-to-happen category.

One vivid example occurred on a carrier flight deck. We were cleared to "charlie spot three." Our mission was

## COMBAT

*I was shocked at the lack of flight-deck safety.*

*I had always heard that rules get thrown out during war, but I didn't believe it.*

to retrieve our CO. We entered a hover 50 yards abeam of spot three and saw the LSE. A carrier flight deck is always alive with activity, so I was not surprised to see aircraft moving behind and to the right of our landing spot. I was surprised to see that the move-crew had stopped and were lounging

PH2 Dave Loveall

## THE MYTH OF SAFETY RULES

By AW2 Phillip Morgan

around as if they were waiting on us. Six or so combat-hardened flight deck veterans, and only one had sense enough to see the danger from our rotor wash. He lowered his goggles and took protective cover. As we side-flared, our rotorwash hit the rest of the crew full blast, sending two of them sprawling on the nonskid. It's a good thing that no other aircraft were moving or those two crewmen might have caused a lot of paperwork! I imagine that they will be fully alert the next time a helicopter lands next to them.

Another example of combat "safety rules" was evident during a pax-and-mail run to Bahrain. On the east ramp at Bahrain Airport, flightline directors were not wearing safety goggles, cranials, or hearing protection. They didn't have long sleeves, either, but that didn't surprise me as most people don't usually force themselves to suffer if they don't have to.

As we taxied out, I asked my HAC if he had noticed the disregard for personal safety. Both the HAC and the copilot replied with a resounding "Yes!"

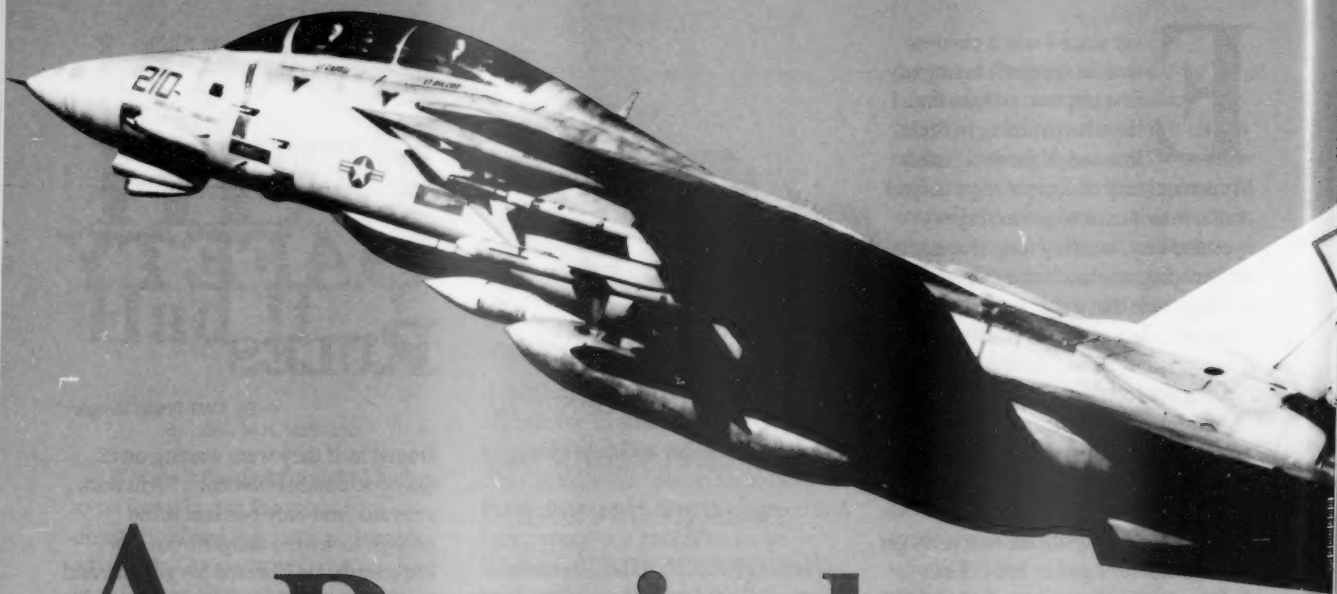
Officers and petty officers must set the example, but it is everyone's responsibility to follow safety guidelines. Combat safety rules don't exist. The next time someone reminds you to use eye, ear and cranial protection, don't give them a lot of flak. ◀

AW2 Morgan is an SH-60B aircrewman (SAR) and plane captain with HSL-42's Det 3 embarked in USS *Leyte Gulf* (CG-55).

17







# A Little Reminder

By Lt. Robert Williams

18 As the sun set rapidly in the west, I was returning from a CAP mission over the Persian Gulf. After four hours, the old Martin-Baker was beginning to take its toll. We tanked and headed back through the recovery corridor. Amazingly, we were beginning to feel comfortable around the KC-135; the ready supply of fuel was a definite bonus.

Checking in with marshal we were told to rendezvous with one of our squadronmates who was already established in the stack. We called him on squadron base and discovered that he needed a section approach. His VDI had failed and the standby gyro was precessing badly. It was almost completely dark now and there was no moon.

The "push" time was rapidly approaching as we rendezvoused. My wingman of opportunity was suffering from moderate vertigo. As we passed the fix inbound for the first time, we had only two minutes to go. Realizing the less-than-optimal situation but unaware of our wingman's vertigo, we asked him if he would be comfortable with a two-minute turn—about 50 degrees AOB in a Tomcat at holding airspeeds. He replied confidently that he could handle the rather steep turn and we decided not to request a later approach time. We learned later than he regretted this decision since his vertigo became worse and he was severely disoriented during the turn.

The F-14 community does not extensively practice, brief, or stress section approaches and procedures, and I found myself

feverishly reviewing these procedures while leading a section approach to the ship on a moonless night after a five-hour mission. The fact that I was not a qualified section lead yet and had never led an actual section approach didn't help, either.

We got both aircraft configured for a night trap using radio calls to eliminate any confusion that hand signals might have caused. After dirtying up, my wingman missed a speedbrake call and began calling for a "few percent" to help him maintain his position. This additional power resulted in too shallow a descent rate which kept me from getting us down to 1,200 feet in time to execute a safe approach.

The ship told us to level off at 2,000 feet and turn downwind to enter the bolter pattern. Had I been farther ahead of my own airplane, I would probably have realized that we were too high soon enough in the approach to have made a safe correction.

My fuel state was getting low. I was worried about how long I would be able to stay up there with my wingman if he should bolter or get waved off on our second approach. He was suffering from severe vertigo and my aircraft was the only attitude reference he had. At this point, as far as my wingman was concerned, it was "me or the sea." The Tomcat is simply not an aircraft that can be flown needle-ball-airspeed.

Thankfully, the rest of the approach went well. I dropped him off on the ball with a good start. The LSOs earned their pay with some excellent calls. I felt so relieved to look down in the



darkness and see that F-14 trap that my own pass was anti-climatic.

We have to fight the urge to let the end justify the means. We debriefed this flight extensively and here are a few conclusions.

Whenever possible, recover in the daytime if your aircraft is losing attitude reference. Partial panel is dangerous and can sometimes be avoided. This was one of those times.

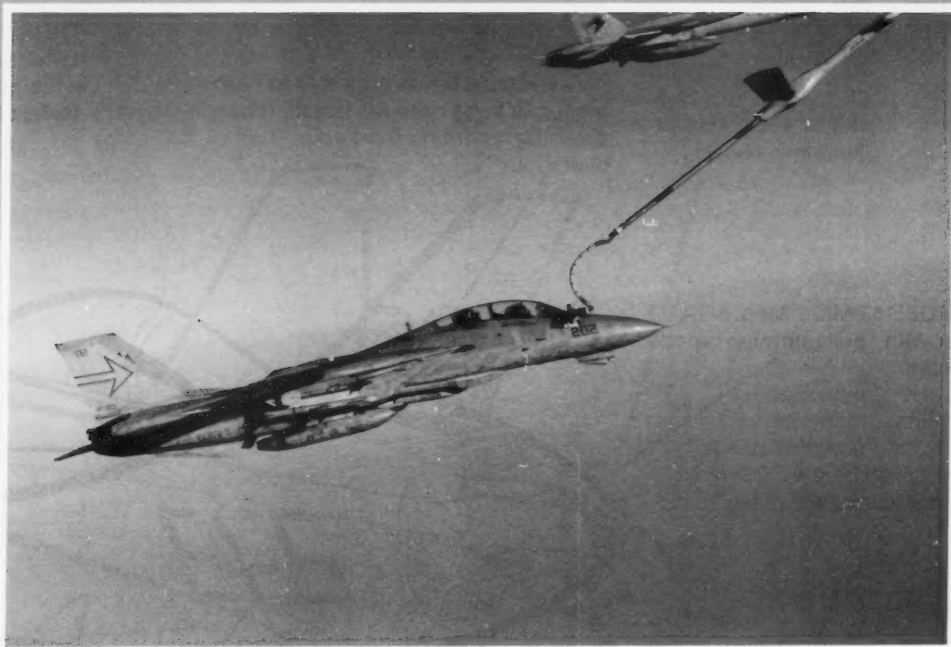
Let your lead know the full extent of your problems. He

can't be expected to make sound judgments if he doesn't know, for instance, that you are suffering from vertigo.

If you're in the lead, *lead*. Don't let experience levels influence your decisions. Cruise veterans get vertigo, too.

You have to know, review, brief and *practice* your emergency procedures continuously. Believe me, just because you did it once a few years ago in the RAG doesn't guarantee that you will be able to pull it off for real around the ship. ◀

Lt. Williams is an F-14 pilot with VF-21.



19

**...I found myself feverishly reviewing procedures while leading a section approach to the ship on a moonless night after a five-hour mission.**

### **Get Help 24-Hours a Day**

If you or someone you know has a safety problem, call the Naval Safety Center.

For answers 24-hours a day 7 days a week.

Call 1-800-HOT-SFTY

# THE *LSO*-PH

KY-28 voice  
calling the ball

Retractable 8mm projector to flash  
Madonna films onto the island, thus  
diverting attention from your "slight  
overshoot"

APGEE-63 Mk. 2 Mod. 5-7A/E/F  
radar with "plat jamming" mode  
selected.

Standard taxi light replaced by  
2,000,000 candle-power Acme "Little  
Sun" fog lamp (highly desirable  
during both day and night  
approaches).

All three approach lights cunningly  
painted amber.

"Curb feeler" from 1951 Hudson  
Hornet (a boon for those who  
sometimes spot the deck).

Electrically lit side numbers. Can be  
changed throughout pass (also  
during LSO-induced technique  
waveoffs).

approach/September 1991

# PROOF AIRCRAFT

voice scrambler (used when  
he ball with those hilariously  
low fuel states).

AFC 509.5 smoke abatement system  
(guaranteed to hide those telltale  
power changes).

Tailhook cleverly disguised as a  
carrot. Saves embarrassment of being  
challenged if your hook isn't down;  
(what LSO would have the nerve to  
ask you to check your carrot?).

21

Can be

Electronic bribe board installed on  
port side (indicates going rate on  
open market for "OK" pass).

Kryptonite-coated hook point, able to  
dig into flight deck with a single  
bound (thereby eliminating  
embarrassing bolters).

Revised from an original idea by  
Lt. Dennis Fitzgerald VF-74

# Wherever You Are...

By Lt. Dean Shults

The cold, gray steel of *Lexington's* hull flashed by my TA-4J's canopy as the LSOs and Air Boss screamed, "Power! Power! Power!" I won't forget that picture. I could have easily avoided the situation if I had listened to some sound advice I had received as a boy. My parents gave me the usual pearls of wisdom, and one uncommon piece of advice: "Wherever you are, be all there." I didn't truly understand that advice until my CQ on "Lady Lex".

On the airlift to Key West, I misplaced my CQ training jacket, which contained all the records of my FCLPs. Before I knew the jacket was missing, we arrived at Key West and the LSOs were on the COD. I spent the entire evening retracing my steps and searching for the missing records while my squadronmates were thinking about their upcoming flights.

My search was fruitless and I hit the rack late. I had a 0430 brief. If I had heeded my parents' advice, I would have focused my attention on the brief and mission, but I kept thinking about my missing jacket.

Almost before I knew it, I was airborne and headed for the carrier on my skipper's wing. Even he had told me to forget about the jacket and concentrate on the CQ. I didn't take his advice, either. When we checked in with marshal, our signal was "buster." Needless to say, I was way behind the jet and not prepared for shipboard ops. I made two touch-and-goes, but my first hook-down pass brought problems. Our SOP for landings ashore was to use full-forward stick on touchdown. I distinctly remember hitting the deck and shoving the throttle and stick forward. Unfortunately, I boltered. With full-forward stick, the Scooter naturally settled off the angle at a rate that got my atten-

tion as well as that of the LSOs and Air Boss. Only by the grace of God was I able to avoid being killed.

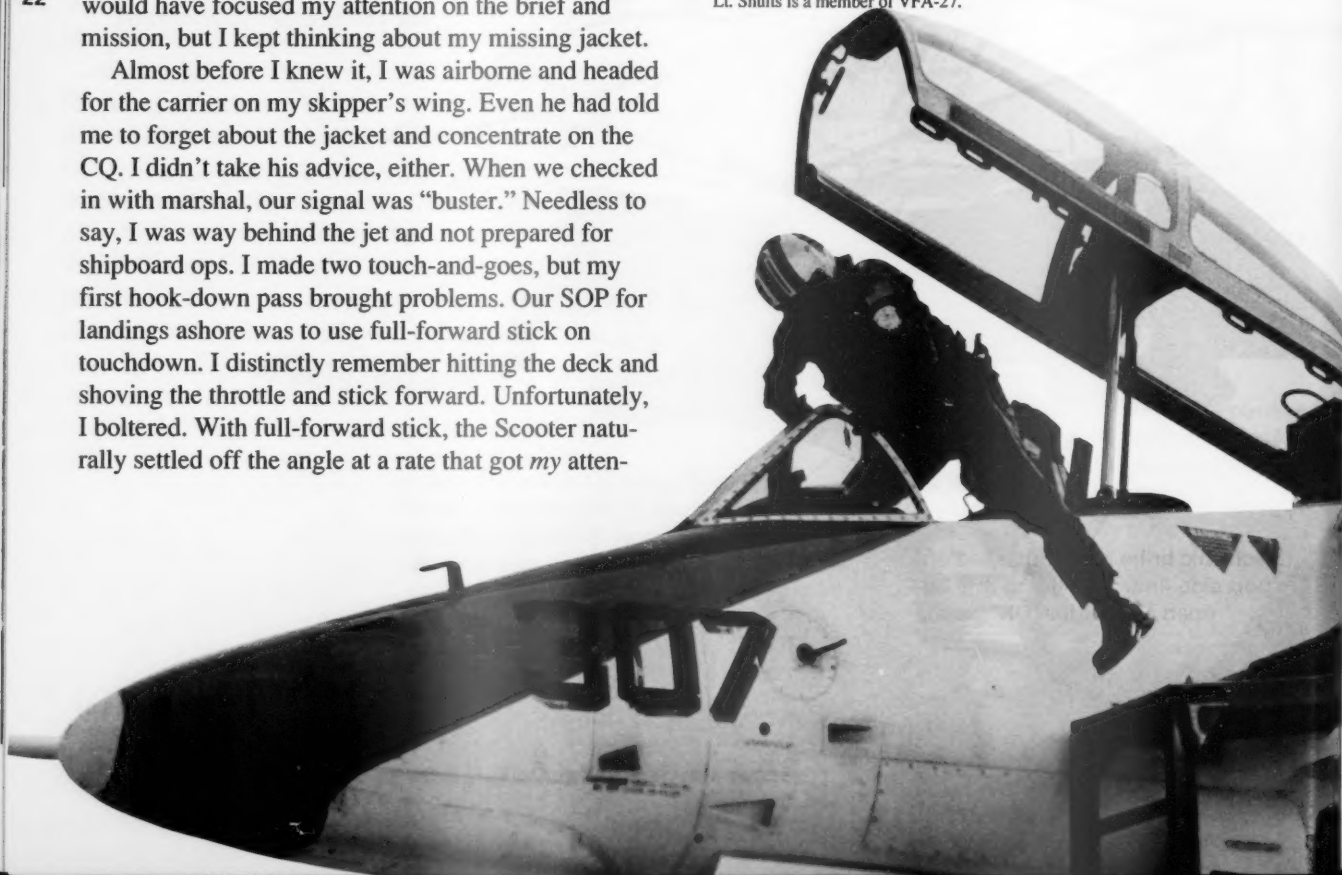
At that point, my signal was "gear up, flaps up, divert to Navy Key West." I also needed my full concentration for this task, but, once again, my mind was preoccupied—this time with my brush with death. Rather than flying a proper profile to Key West, nearly 100 miles away, I flew low and fast. Wonder of wonders, I arrived in the break with a low-fuel light and a knot in my stomach.

The next day, after some stern words from my skipper, I pulled myself together, returned to the carrier and qualified.

In some ways I would like to completely erase that flight from my memory, and yet, on more than one occasion, I have used that eye-level view of Lex's port catwalk to remind myself that wherever I am, I had better be all there. The older I get, the wiser my parents get.

Lt. Shults is a member of VFA-27.

22





# Five-Card Draw

By Lt. Michael Whetstone

*The cards were dealt and we felt good about the hand we had, even though a no-flap, low-visibility recovery at night is never easy.*

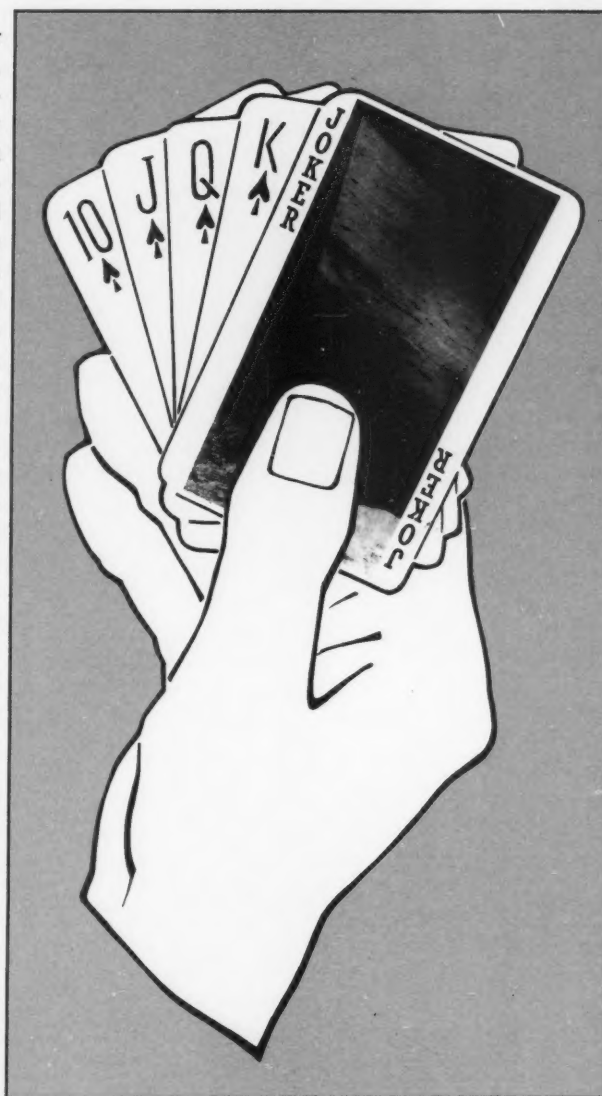
**I**t all started with the standard night 1 v 1 AIC hop. We briefed demonstrating the current bogey threat by initiating a supersonic low-altitude run-in. After we made the intercept and absorbed the successful missile attacks from our lead, we joined up to return to marshal.

As we turned to find our lead, our aircraft felt sluggish. Cockpit indications were normal but as I looked out, I saw that the wings were still back at 50 degrees instead of the 20-degree cruise setting. We used the emergency mode to sweep the wings to 20 degrees, but as we did, things started to fall apart. After covering all the appropriate PCL procedures, the best thing we could do was to set up for a no-flap approach.

No big deal. I had an experienced pilot and the skipper was now our wingman. We thought we had addressed all the contingencies in the "pocket rocket," along with trouble-shooting techniques from the CO.

We proceeded to marshal and began padding ourselves against any other problems. We discussed no-flap approaches—increased approach speed and pitch authority, the amplified burble created by the ship, the poor visibility, and all the possible diverts in the Gulf of Oman.

The cards were dealt and we felt good about the hand we had, even though a no-flap, low-visibility recovery at night is never easy.



As we made our approach, everything looked good. Paddles had us just outside three-quarters of a mile and the ship accelerated to give us the appropriate wind over the deck. We were flying the needles on and on when the starboard winds caused us to drift left. Paddles gave

us a "right for lineup" call and we corrected with some right wing down. We dropped like a rock. Everyone with a radio yelled for power as the ball went red, then off the lens. My pilot had the throttles to military so we were slaves to the thrust of our two TF-30s.

The ramp loomed large in front of us as thoughts of a night low-level ejections raced through our minds. We hit the ramp with our hook hitting 18 inches below the rounddown and our right engine shroud scraping the deck 10 feet later. We hook-skipped the 1-wire, but caught the 2-wire.

After we settled our nerves we thought about what had happened. We never adequately considered the problems of a late lineup correction. If we hadn't made such a drastic lineup correction and instead taken a waveoff, we might have saved our squadron many maintenance hours and ourselves a few gray hairs.

We had felt committed to land on the first pass. Our own self-imposed restrictions defeated us. We were the only players in this game and literally held all the cards. We dealt our own losing hand. ◀

Lt. Whetstone is a RIO with VF-21.



Left to right: Lt. Stu Broce, LCdr. Steve Riker

**Lt. Stu Broce  
LCdr. Steve Riker  
VF-1**

Lt. Broce (pilot) and LCdr. Riker (RIO) launched from USS *Ranger* (CV-61) for a 1 v 1 ACM training flight over Saudi Arabia. After three engagements, the flight joined and began its return leg, climbing over deteriorating weather.

As the flight leveled at FL 230, Lt. Broce noticed a fuel split developing. Lt. Broce and LCdr. Riker followed NATOPS and selected fuel feed to the right (high) side, which failed to stop the fuel migration.

Their wingman reported they were venting fuel and Lt. Broce selected normal on the fuel feed and pulled the fuel-dump circuit-breaker (RD1) to isolate the fuel systems. This procedure also failed to stop the increasing split and the pilot reset RD1. The left fuel-quantity indicator continued toward zero and the left engine flamed out.

While LCdr. Riker initiated the single-engine checklist, Lt. Broce reported that both left and right fuel-pressure caution lights were lit. Shortly thereafter, the right engine flamed out.

Descending to maintain windmill airspeed, the F-14 entered the clouds at FL 220 where the crew tried several airstarts. They also prepared to eject

while their wingman coordinated a SAR effort. On the third astart attempt, the right engine started, but the left engine did not.

Lt. Broce leveled at 12,000 feet in IMC and continued toward the carrier. While he and LCdr. Riker reviewed single-engine procedures, their wingman coordinated with the CV which made a ready deck. Lt. Broce flew a single-engine, case III approach through rain and 1.5 mile visibility, and an 800-foot overcast. LCdr. Riker backed him up with airspeed and VSI

calls, and Lt. Broce trapped with an OK 2-wire.

Naval Air Systems Command is investigating the cause of this incident.

**Lt. James D. Thompson  
VFA-106**

Lt. Thompson launched from NAS Cecil Field on a functional checkflight and climbed to 15,000 feet. During the flaps-down portion of the crossbleed checks, with the right engine secured, the F/A-18's entire horizontal stabilator reverted to the mechanical backup mode, an extremely rare occurrence in the Hornet. In the mechanical flight-control mode, the normal electronic control-by-wire flight-control system is bypassed.

Lt. Thompson tried to reset the flight controls to the primary mode but was unsuccessful. With the stabilator actuators now directly connected to the control stick through a series of cables and pulleys, pitch control was severely reduced.

After a controllability check, Lt. Thompson made a 160-knot approach to a successful field arrestment.



# BRAVO ZULU



Left to right: Lt. William Flanagan, Lt. Kenneth Szmed, AW1 Monte Willey and AW3 Joseph Opp

Lt. Kenneth Szmed  
Lt. William Flanagan  
AW1 Monte Willey  
AW3 Joseph Opp  
HSL-48

After completing a surface surveillance and mine search mission in the north Arabian Gulf during Desert Storm, the SH-60B headed back to USS *Hawes* (FFG-53). Lt. Szmed (HAC) and Lt. Flanagan (copilot) noticed a transient No. 2 engine chip light, followed by a muffled explosion and engine failure.

After going through emergency procedures, Lt. Flanagan flew the helicopter to the nearest ready deck, USS *Paul F. Foster* (DD-964).

Lt. Szmed briefed his crew, coordinated with *Foster*, and jettisoned non-essential stores. He also dumped fuel and determined the best single-engine approach and landing profiles.

AW1 Willey and AW3 Opp completed checklists for emergency landing-ditching and provided radar vectors to their pilots. Meanwhile, *Foster*

quickly gave best winds across her deck as she maneuvered through a known mine area.

With Lt. Szmed providing direction, Lt. Flanagan made a single-engine approach and landing.

Maj. Ken Gordon, USMCR  
Capt. Jay Bullard, USMC  
Cpl. Lloyd Steelman, USMCR  
HMM-774

While leading a section of CH-46Es on a night-vision-goggle training flight in Saudi Arabia, one of the Sea Knight's engines suddenly failed during cruise flight at 100 feet and 100 KIAS.

Capt. Bullard (HAC) immediately called for PMS OFF and turned into the wind, setting up for an emergency landing in the desert.

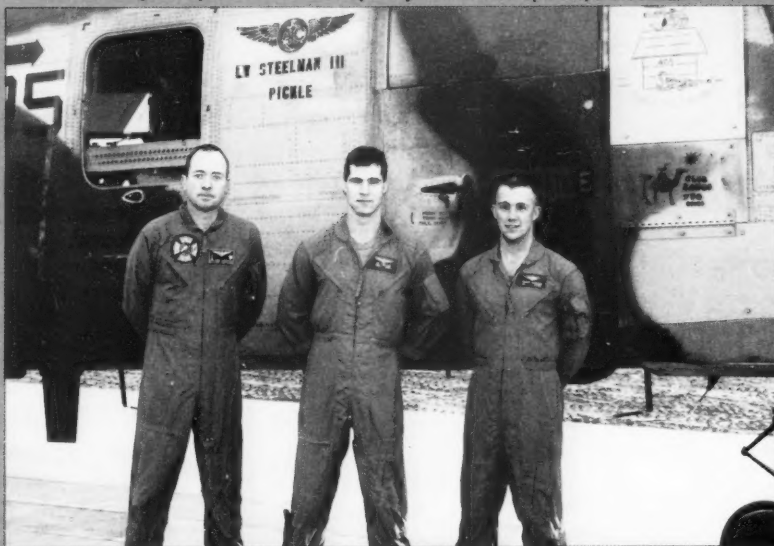
Maj. Gordon (copilot) confirmed that the No. 2 engine was off-line and called out airspeeds and altitudes until 25 feet when Cpl. Steelman (crew chief) took over and cleared the HAC to land.

Capt. Bullard made a single-engine, no-hover landing.

The cause of the engine failure was the loss of the accessory drive shaft. The engine was changed in the desert the next morning.

25

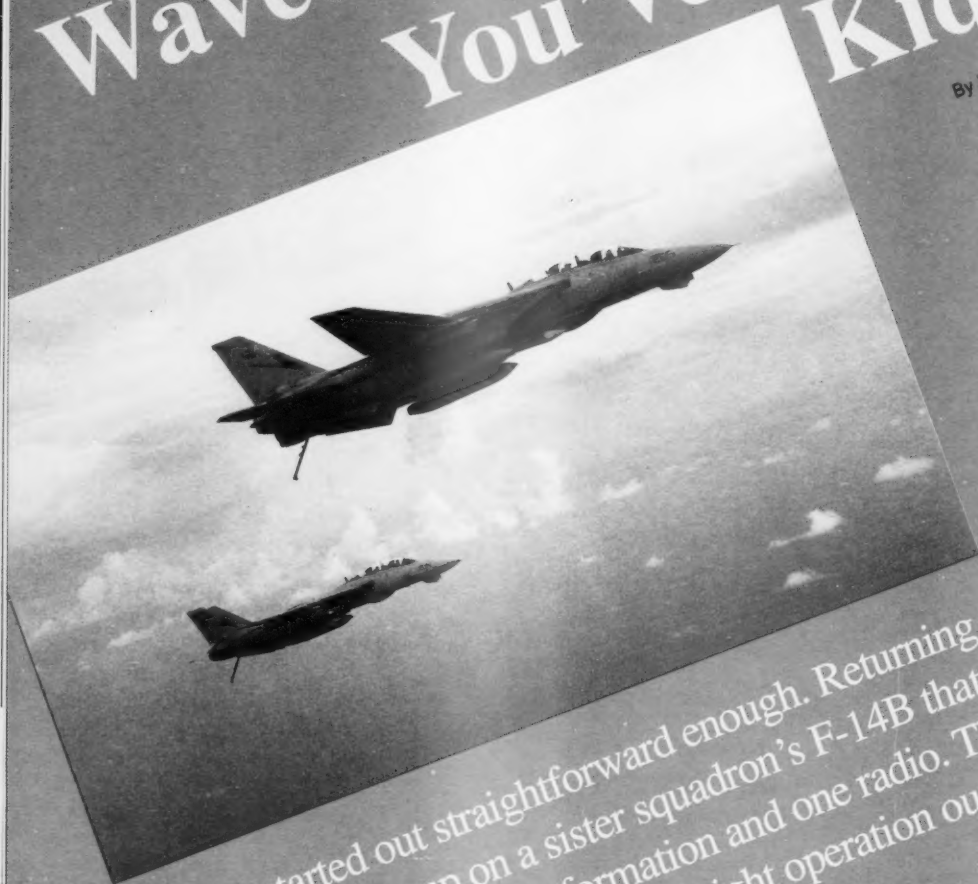
Left to right: Major Ken Gordon, Capt. Jay Bullard and Cpl. Lloyd Steelman





# Waveoff, Foul Deck? You've Got To Be Kidding!

By LCdr. James R. Wyly



It started out straightforward enough. Returning to marshal, I was told to join up on a sister squadron's F-14B that had lost all altitude and navigation information and one radio. The night was black and this was our first night operation out of port.

As I continued to marshal, I went over how I would fly the approach and briefed items such as smooth flying, configuration signals, airspeed on the approach and when to drop the other F-14 off.

Having just completed a tour as an FRS instructor, I decided to treat this section approach as an FRS hop. I also felt that it was important to determine who the other pilot was. Of course, he was their newest nugget. He had finished the FRS only two months before and was doing well around the boat. He had the occasional lapses we all



did with only two months in the fleet.

We joined up at 13,000 feet and I briefed my new wingman on how I would fly the approach. Everything seemed set, and I asked for a manual push to avoid unnecessary formation flying that would certainly have added to the problem.

CATCC complied and told us to proceed inbound as soon as we joined up. The CV-1 was uneventful and I was impressed with the other pilot's performance under the circumstances.

We dirtied up at 10 miles and we were completely in the landing configuration by six miles. I slowed to 150 knots, 10 knots over on-speed, to give him some maneuvering airspeed for formation flying. We pushed at three miles and flew a mode II approach to one mile where I detached and gave him a centered-needle start.

He settled a little, and in retrospect, I should have anticipated that and dropped him off high. But the LSOs were talking to him and everything seemed to be working out alright. In the event of a waveoff or bolter, I positioned myself at his 11 o'clock at 1,200 feet. I never expected to hear, "Waveoff, foul deck."

I was so appalled and enraged that, without hesitation, I got on the radio. "You've got to be kidding!" Foul deck? Was the ship surprised that we were coming? Didn't an F-14 with no attitude reference or navigation instruments on a black night with a brand-new nugget rate more of a priority than that? Who was in charge?

I strongly asked for priority the next time. I was intentionally sarcastic, but I had had it and I wanted to get my point across.

We joined up and turned downwind for another look. My fuel state was 4.5; my wingman's was 7.0. I briefed my nugget RIO not to let them hook us in early, and sure enough, at 3.8 miles, CATCC turned us to the final bearing. We politely told them we needed two more miles. At six miles, we turned to final bearing, and with a 30-40-degree angle-of-bank, we still overshot the final bearing.

Trying to be smooth for a wingman with these controllers was getting to be difficult. I can't imagine what it would have been like turning in at 3.8 miles.

We flew this approach and it wasn't as smooth as the first for either of us, but I dropped my wingman off this time two needle-widths high and the LSOs got him aboard. When my turn came, my fuel state was 3.0. I flew a smooth pass that settled into a 1-wire. I appreciated getting a fair instead of a no-grade. What a night. At least it was over...or so I thought.

Apparently, my two radio calls had caused quite a stir. My CO quickly met me in the ready room where he got a call from CAG. Air Ops wanted to see me; he was pretty mad. But there were several important points.

Air Ops had not given us any priority over anyone else. They waved us off because our interval behind an E-2C wasn't sufficient. The ship continued a normal recovery with absolutely no special handling for a crippled F-14.

I could have told CATCC we would be flying the approach 10 knots faster, but they should have recognized the decreasing interval between us and the E-2 and taken the Hummer out of the pattern. I should have also asked for priority beforehand, even though Air Ops should have automatically given it to us.

Leave no stone unturned when you need to land. Even better, don't wait on an emergency to establish a rapport with Air Ops. The closer you work together in normal conditions, the better handling you can expect in an emergency.

None of us is perfect and it was easy for me to blame Air Ops, just as it was easy for them to get mad at me for my radio calls. Lessons are not learned by blaming someone else and moving on. We commit ourselves to making the same mistakes later unless each of us evaluates his performance and determines what he could do better.

There's no doubt that my radio calls got the attention we deserved, and that without them, we wouldn't have got the priority. The issue, though, is how well the ship and air wing work together. An aircraft carrier is the model of efficiency but it requires a lot of work to keep it so. Looking out for the other guy is what this business is based on. We all gain when that philosophy is extended to every aspect of operations.

LCdr. Wyllly is an F-14B pilot with VF-24.



# LEAD, FOLLOW

## or Better Yet, Get Out of the Way!

By Lt. Kevin Cronin

We'd spent an hour-and-a-half on station in the Persian Gulf monitoring electronic emissions in our EA-6B. We were just about to wrap it up and head in for the last recovery of the night with a comfortable fuel load when our controlling E-2 called. He asked us to intercept another E-2 with unspecified instrument problems and lead him back to the ship. Why not. It was a chance to help some of our shipmates.

28 Several problems occurred to me, but I discounted all of them. The prop job had significantly different flying characteristics. Our pilot was a new guy; although he was very competent, he was not section-qualified. E-2s rarely fly in formation and never at night. A smart mission commander would have replied, "Unable." I asked for a vector, figuring that we could come alongside at a safe distance and let him trail us back to Mom.

The pilot of the E-2 reported that he was at angels 22 and had lost all navigation equipment except pitot static and the backup gyro. Apparently, the highly charged weather in the area had not only given him a light show but had also knocked out his standby compass. Punching through an overcast layer, we found the Hummer heading in the right direction. We caught up with him on his right side then crossed over to the left.

Keeping sight was becoming increasingly difficult as the layers started closing in on us. We slowed to 210 knots, about as slow as we could reasonably manage and as fast as he could go. It was at this point that the differences in our aircraft showed up.

We were now overhead the carrier but still above the cloud deck. Strike urged us to bring the E-2 down through the overcast. We had complied with the first request, but once again we should have answered, "Unable." We didn't.

As we headed outbound, clouds still caused the E-2 pilot to lose sight momentarily. He was doing all he could to keep up and we were wallowing around like an overloaded truck. It should have been obvious that there was no way we could bring him down through the clouds. Instead, we were wrapped up in the task and kept pressing. As we started a slow left turn, the E-2 pilot lost sight again.

We still had him about one mile abeam and called our position. Right then, we went IFR again and decided we couldn't do any more for him. Fortunately, he found a hole in the overcast and went for it. Descending through the clouds, we were treated to a fine display of St. Elmo's fire accompanied by a not-so-fine loss of our airspeed indicator as the pitot-static froze.

LCdr Dave Parsons



The system came back in a few minutes as we broke through the cloud deck at 10,000 feet. Our rescue attempt had used up our comfort-level of gas, but with random vectors, we still had a reasonable amount for recovery. Now for a nice, boring case III approach, right? Wrong. There is no such thing and sure enough, we bolted. The second try resulted in a well-flown pass and trap.

As I walked into the ready room, the ops officer, who had been in CATCC, came up and said, "That wouldn't have read well," meaning the mishap report if we had had to write one. As the safety officer I had to agree. More importantly, I knew better. I let my desire to help overrule my common sense. The E-2 had a perfect chance to use all those practice no-gyro approaches; there were plenty of controllers who were ready to give him one. Sometimes the best help is to just stay out of the way.

Lt. Cronin is an ECMO with VAQ-136.

## A Real Kick:

By Ltjg. John Gormley

# Jet Blast

The scene was set for something I thought could never happen. My pilot was a salty veteran of many turnaround training dets and was pretty handy around the boat.

Our Turkey was parked on the patio behind cat 4 with its twin tails pointed sideways, hanging well over the water. Our preflight went well until we ventured onto the turtleback. This point is where my pilot usually pulls rank and makes me check out the aft section, but today we cheated death together.

We had walked 20 minutes late, and the ship was spinning an alert-5 KA-6 tanker on cat 4, a fact my pilot didn't share with me.

As he looked from behind the vertical stab, he had two thoughts: he was

glad he had the safety sense to duck behind the stab to avoid the tanker's jet blast, and what was I doing flat on my back, rolling toward the cold, blue Pacific?

The next thing I knew, I was lying in the safety net, questioning my choice of career. Why hadn't I been more alert and seen what was going on around me? Who invented liquid soap, and why did my pilot seem to move his leg away just as I grabbed for it while I was being hurled down the stab?

I didn't anticipate that the blast would soon be directed on me. Head-on-a-swivel held true once again. The next time I'm on the flight deck, I'll be doing my Linda Blair imitation.

Luckily, the Boss' lack of height and lack of visual acuity kept him from seeing me. The plane captain helped me out of the net and we eventually launched for an uneventful mission. When we returned to the ship, I smoothly talked my pilot into a no-grade 1-wire.

Ltjg. Gormley is a RIO with VF-211.



LCdr Dave Parsons

## There's No Tenure Here!

By Lt. Thomas Marotta

My squadron has had two ramp strikes in the past six weeks. As I was working on the embarked-landing hazard reports, I realized that as long as I am a naval aviator, I will never be able to relax on the job. My two squadronmates did—one for three seconds and the other for four seconds. Two second-cruise pilots, each with more than 250 safe carrier landings, let down for a total of seven seconds. Whether or not their lapses were intentional doesn't matter. What does matter is that in the time it takes to read this sentence, my squadron almost lost two aircraft and four lives. Fortunately, the result was two hook slaps and two cut-pass taxi 1-wires.

Here's my point: in almost any other career in the military or government, in order to lose a job, performance must deteriorate over a period of time. This criteria does not hold in carrier aviation. Every time a pilot leaves the ready room to man up, he puts his job and his wings, on the line. If he does everything right for the entire hop, he keeps his wings. If he lets down for even a second, or makes one grave error, his career and possibly his life could be over. There is no tenure in naval aviation.

Lt. Marotta is an F-14 pilot with VF-21. He is the squadron's senior LSO.

29



# Between Iraq and a Hard Place

By Lt. Burke Wellborn

**Four** weeks into the war and we're ready to take our F-14 on another night, overland BARCAP south of Baghdad. I wasn't looking forward to this one since our air wing had already spent the past couple of weeks on the night shift. Also, I was taking a wingman from our sister squadron. Although he had a good reputation as a ball flyer and ACM driver, I had never flown with him before. To top things off, night hops in-country meant at least three trips to the KC-135.

Ordinarily, the 135 isn't too much of a problem, but the weather the past few nights had included several solid cloud layers starting from around 10,000 feet up to the high 20s. In this type of weather, the 135s normally flew in the low 30s and tanking at those altitudes and at the required airspeeds was the most trying part of the hop.

The launch and joinup went OK, and we proceeded to the northern tanker tracks just south of the border. Our AWACS controller had trouble vectoring us to our assigned tanker. After a few false starts, I spotted another tanker's lights. Any port in a storm, so I told the controller that we would tank from the one we had in sight since time was getting short. We topped off and headed into bad-guy country.

We were supposed to maintain station from 0200 to 0330, head back to the tanker, top off and then return to station for another hour-and-a-half. About 15 minutes before the end of our first period, my RIO called the controller for the tanker's position. The tanker was over hostile territory, just 60 miles south of our present position.

We started in that direction feeling pretty good about being able to stay on station, but the AWACS gave us vectors that didn't jibe with our own radar picture. I started to get a sinking feeling when I saw the lights of our radar contact pass down our right side. The tanker that the AWACS had assigned us was a 135 all right but he didn't have a basket. The 135 we had just passed did have a basket, but he was now 85 miles north of us. By this time, our fuel was getting low and I knew our wingman had less. I had

You can't build a worse scenario:  
at night, over hostile territory,  
too low on fuel to reach a suitable  
bingo field, and single-engine.

briefed an RTB fuel state, if for some reason we couldn't tank, and we were getting uncomfortably close to that number. Since we had tanked before, however, I felt that no matter what our fuel state was, we would have no problems taking fuel once we got to the tanker.

We finally joined up on a KC-10 about 100 miles inside Iraq. The weather was true to form—clobbered from 9,000 feet up to 26,000 feet. The KC-10 was at 29,000 feet at 310 KIAS. By the time we joined, both Tomcats were below our briefed go-home fuel. I let my wingman go first and asked the tanker pilot to slow down to 270 knots since at this altitude, the Tomcat has trouble staying in the basket once it



LCdr Dave Parsons





gets heavier with fuel. Using afterburner helps, but the engine's stall margin decreases.

Despite the slower speed, my wingman backed out of the basket after only 30 seconds and radioed that he had just had a compressor stall.

You can't build a worse scenario: at night, over hostile territory, too low on fuel to reach a suitable bingo field, and single-engine. My wingman managed to clear his stall and successfully relight his engine. After he had fallen back some distance behind the tanker, I moved in to take a few thousand pounds. I told my RIO to pull the mid-compression bypass (MCB) circuit-breakers so I would have more power available in basic engine and not have to use afterburner to stay in the basket.

In the Tomcat, MCBs open under several circumstances, one being when the inflight refueling probe is extended. This situation increases the engine stall margin, but at the expense of a significant amount of thrust. I had refueled from Air Force tankers with my MCBs disabled a dozen times with no problems. This night would be different.

Two feet from the basket, I heard a bang and saw the right engine's stall light come on. As I fell out of position, I called that I had also had a compressor stall. After much excitement in the cockpit, I got the engine back on line and told my wingman to join up. We headed south into friendlier country.

I told the AWACS to start sending another tanker toward us and to alert King Khalid Military City—our normal divert—that we might be heading their way. The

controller told us that King Khalid had no runway lighting for night landings. I replied that if we didn't get fuel we wouldn't have much choice.

AWACS did a super job getting another 135 to us at a slower speed, lower altitude and ready to pump. The tanker saw us first and turned in front of us to expedite the joinup. Again, my wingman went to the basket first and took enough gas to get safely back to the ship. Then I topped off. My wingman went back in and also topped off.

The long flight back to the ship gave me plenty of time to think about our mistakes. I should have taken firmer control of the situation right from the start, letting AWACS know when we first arrived who our assigned tanker was and what our on- and off-stations times were. This information would have kept us from chasing tankers without baskets.

Also, rather than try to bypass the engine-stall protection features, I should have left the MCBs alone and used burner to stay in the basket.

Finally, I should have followed our brief. The decision to stay out on station despite reaching our go-home fuel came from our feeling that this was combat and we could hack it a few minutes more.

I now have a better understanding of the logic behind the maxim "Train like you fight; fight like you train." With all the excitement during the flight, I should have fallen back to basics instead of assuming that everything would work out.

Lt. Wellborn is an F-14 pilot with VF-41.

# Horse Pills

By LCdr. Mark Guadagnini

## For Everyone! I'm Buyin'!



32

**I**n the gym on the big, gray playground, trying to fend off the effects of long hours on the platform and even longer days at sea, I'm working bench press. I'm trying for that 10th rep with 205 pounds. Strain, grunt...*pop!*

I knew the moment I heard the sound that I wasn't going to fly later. Within minutes, my neck was so stiff that I had to get help untying my shoelaces and putting on my flightsuit so I could go see the doc. He prescribed heat treatment, rest and a couple of horse pills every four hours...plus a three-day down-chit.

This story isn't about me, though, or weightlifting, or my stiff neck. This story is about what can happen if you don't pay attention to what you put in your mouth.

I was on the platform as the "supervisor of waving," i.e., CAG LSO. It was a very pretty day in the Red Sea about two weeks after recovering from my bench-press hijinks.

The Hornets were starting to recover, doing nicely, until the third section leader rolled into the groove and called the ball. It was rather unusual for a ziplip case I recovery.

He flew an ugly, dog-jumping-into-a-pickup-truck, no-grade 4-wire. This was also unusual since I knew him as one of the best ball fliers in the air wing, my illustrious cohort in crime and my roommate. During our debrief, he just smiled sheepishly, shaking his head and agreeing with all the spanking and admonishments rendered by the LSO—a lesson in how to take a no-grade.

Afterward, in private, he said, "That was the worst hop of my life. Did you ever have one of those days when you just couldn't do anything right? When it seemed like you had a 60-knot mentality in a 500-knot jet? I couldn't plug, couldn't bomb, couldn't even think of what I was going to do next."

I listened and agreed with what he said, but something in the back of my mind was nagging at me. Sure, I'd had hops like that, but only after a long layoff; we had been flying heavily during the last few weeks. Or when I wasn't feeling good. Something didn't jibe. Nobody hit the ramp, though, and another crisis erupted in the CAG office that drew our attention away from the incident, and we forgot about it altogether.

Two weeks later, we hit our 50th day underway and had the always-hoped-for Beer Day. After our two lukewarm beers in the hot sun, we were both the proud owners of major-league headaches. Back in the room, I popped a couple of aspirin from my bottle in the medicine cabinet and trundled off to the head. When I came back, my roommate was already in the rack, preparing for the sleep-til-you're-hungry part of the cruise.

"Hey, what kind of aspirin are those big ones, anyway?" he asked. "I took two of them and my headache is going away already, but I feel very sleepy."

My eyebrows skyrocketed off my forehead! Those "big ones" were the horse pills the doc gave me when I hurt my neck! I had transferred them from the little envelope they came in to the aspirin bottle. When I told my roommate, he laughed a little, then stopped, obviously remembering something.

"Do you remember a couple of weeks ago," he said, "when I had that lousy hop? Well, I had a headache so I took a couple of those pills before the flight. I wonder if that's why I flew so bad."

After pulling my eyebrows back down, I thought about the fact that he could have easily killed himself in an airplane because he unknowingly was flying under the influence of prescription medicine.

Obviously, pilots need all their physical and mental faculties when they fly. Flying and medicine—or flying and illness—don't mix.

LCdr. Guadagnini is the CVW-8 LSO.



I set up for a six-mile straight-in. CATCC had needles and bullseye up, so I split them up on the HUD and the ADI. At about four miles I got the low-fuel master caution light. Heartbeat check, I guess. At three miles, I started my push down the chute, a little antsy, real sweaty and working all the way.

# My HARLEY's Last Ride

By Lt. Tom Dostie

Seven days into the war. The bogeys had stopped coming at us and today was the proverbial milkrun—the hop to be on. Our A-7s carried four Mk-83s on stations 1,2,6, and 8, fammo and two ‘winders apiece. Our target was a lightly defended facility in western Iraq. Yeah, this would be fun.

I strolled up to the roof for a few high-fives with the ordies and my standard preflight. We manned up our mighty Corsairs stacked neatly up on the four row. As the launch started, I gave the spare a snicker as I taxied by him, number three for cat 1.

My turn...over the JBD, keep it coming, drop the launch bar, a little left, clunk, come ahead, into the buffer, ahh-h. Turn it up, take tension...good motor, no cautions, good hydraulics, wipe ‘em out, salute. One potato, two potato, yahoo!

Three-quarters of the way down the stroke, I felt the jet slump and cock a little to the left. Just as the question marks popped into my head, *bang!* My head snapped forward and my kneeboard went flying as I hit the end of the shot.

“Clearing turn off the bow,” called the Boss.

“Standby,” I replied.

“Boss, looks like the last A-7 off cat 1 blew a tire,” said one of the bubbas still sitting on the four row.

A quick look around showed a good motor and, unfortunately, no. 2 hydraulics rapidly decreasing. The gear handle was staying down and I climbed straight ahead.

“Boss, 403. I lost PC-2. Gear and flaps down and locked.”

“Roger, take angels 2. We’ll send someone up to take a look.”

The spare launched. I wasn’t going anywhere. A fellow striker looked me over.

“Looks like the nosegear is trailing,” he said.

“Rrr-rats!”

Departure said, “Proceed to the jettison area for ordinance release.”

Once in the box, I hit the salvo jettison button. Everything dropped except for the thousand-pounder hanging on station six, right above the mainmount with two ‘winders to



keep it company. With the gear down, an interlock prevents ordnance from jettisoning from the inboard weapons stations.

As I trolled back at 200 knots, I relayed my final configuration through departure and switched to the tower.

"403, tower."

"Go ahead."

"Why don't you set up for a low approach so we can get a better look at you. LSOs are on station."

"Roger," I replied.

I took the first one in to an in-close waveoff.

"403, we didn't get a good look. How about another pass?"

"Roger."

Same thing...big pause.

"Yeah, uh, 403, we can't quite get a—uh—good enough look at you. We're going to send up another A-7."

That translated to "It looks real bad from down here, and we don't know what to do with you yet."

As I circled overhead at angels 2.5, I saw a fellow Corsair joining. Before he was even close aboard, I heard the mike key.

"Oh, man," he chuckled, "There's no way you're gonna trap this one."

I switched up our tactical on the back radio for a little chat.

"OK, Budman," I asked him, "What's *really* wrong?"

"Well, the good news is your strut is down-and-locked. The bad news is there aren't any wheels on the end of it. The

axle beam is broken, one wheel is gone and the other is barely hanging on."

"Beauty."

As I looked down I could almost see the smoke coming from the tower as all the heavies made a final decision.

"403, tower." Here it comes.

"Go ahead."

"We've all talked it over and decided it would be best to barricade you."

Everyone was thinking it and now someone said it. They used the "B" word.

"Okie-dokie," I answered.

Then, one by one, came the soothing voices—the skipper, Air Boss, captain, LSOs, you name it.

"Should be a piece of cake...no problem...a walk in the park." They charlied the rest of the air wing and my escort gave me a sincere "Good luck, Steamer," and went into the break. I looked down and saw yellow shirts everywhere taxiing all the jets up to the bow and raising JBDs 1 and 2. I had to laugh (but not very hard). "Piece of cake—that bomb's not going anywhere." Strictly a precautionary measure.

Next came the 10-item brief from CAG paddles. I was lucky—nice day, good wind, great vis, big, steady deck. I had a 4-degree glideslope, target 1-wire.

I set up for a six-mile straight-in. CATCC had needles and bullseye up, so I split them up on the HUD and the ADI. At about four miles I got the low-fuel master caution light. Heartbeat check, I guess. At three miles, I started my push



Lt. Dostie beside his A-7E just after he brought it safely back on board and into the barricade net.

PH2 Mickey Moore



PH3 Leonard J. Filon

down the chute, a little antsy, real sweaty and working all the way.

At 2.5 miles, CATCC called, "Slightly below and on." ADI said on and on.

Two miles. CATCC called, "Below and on."

My ADI read on and on.

HUD: below and on.

Ball: low.

You guessed it. Bullseye was set for a 3.5-degree glideslope, needles and ball on four degrees.

I made a quick correction and transition to the HUD.

On and on at 1.5 miles.

One mile: slightly above and on.

Three-quarters of a mile: on and on. I called the ball with as much testosterone as I could muster.

"403, Corsair, ball, 1.2."

"Roger, ball," CAG paddles called, "lookin' good."

I was surprised that even with about 100 feet of Dupont's finest stretched across the landing area, it wasn't really that distracting.

"A little power," paddles called.

Remember that line, "You'll lose the ball momentarily at about the IM-IC position because of the stanchion. Just call clara."

Well, the ball did go away but, I figured, how long can it last? Two potatoes later and about four octaves higher, I called, "Clara!" followed by a more manly "Ball!"

About the time I reacquired the ball, I experienced a major case of deck rush from the barricade, four-degree glideslope, target 1-wire, and the burble all at once. Knowing the A-7's burble characteristics, I went to military then heard the "cut, cut, cut!" and came around the horn with a surprisingly easy, yet unnatural motion. OK-underline.

The landing felt normal. Then, I caught the 1-wire and the nose came crashing down. I skipped the 2-wire, caught no. 3, barricade, and 4-wire for one of the shortest rides of my life, stopping well short of the lens. That was surely *this* Harley's last ride!

Lt. Dostie flew A-7Es with VA-72 during Desert Storm. He is currently transitioning to the F/A-18 with VFA-106.



PHAN Sean Flynn

36

We had been flying suppression of enemy air defense (SEAD) for more than a week and we were a little tired. We were still pumped up, though; after all, this was for real.

We joined up with another Prowler and headed for the KC-135. We had the lead and went in first. The boom was moving more than usual and it was a dark night. Our pilot was experienced, however, with a lot of KC-135 time. I knew he had seen worse.

He made a few unsuccessful attempts and then told us he had vertigo. We backed out and let our wingman get gas to let our pilot recage. We tanked again but didn't get as much as we had briefed. No problem. The tankers would still be there after the strike and we could top off then. We had done it before.

We arrived on station with jammers on and expected to simply watch the light show for four or five laps on track then go home. However, in our second orbit, we saw the bright flash of a SAM five to ten miles off our nose. We

turned hard and watched it track us. We rolled inverted and broke under it as we fired chaff and flares. The missile exploded above and beyond our aircraft.

We resumed our orbit and completed the last two laps. The evasive maneuvering had put us even farther behind our planned fuel ladder for this stage of the flight. But there was still plenty of gas to get us comfortably back to the tanker.

Our mission was successful and we had gotten our ordnance and trons on target. All the jets were feet wet. We had about 6,500 pounds of gas and started back toward the tankers. Visibility was good and we found the stack of KC-135s easily. We also found our F/A-18 CAP and his wingman at our assigned altitude, already in line.

One of the tankers called that this receiver would be his last customer. Was that our altitude? Yep, the other plane was finished and the tanker was raising his boom. We now had 5,500 pounds. A quick look to our primary divert showed bingo would be about 4,000 pounds. The other three

...we saw the bright flash of a SAM five to ten miles off our nose. We turned hard and watched it track us.

mission tankers had also left but there were still other assets around. We decided to call the E-2 and see if he could find out if anyone had some gas to give us.

"Ironclaw, negative radar contact. Recycle your parrot," the E-2 controller said. We shook our heads and tried to get our IFF to work. No luck.

"Ironclaw, call your father." We gave our position from the nearest TACAN. We now had 5,000 pounds but we had a vector. All right, traffic off the nose; that must be it. We tried to join but realized that this guy was headed away from the tanker orbit. We called the E-2 again. The intermittent IFF caused more delays but we finally confirmed it wasn't our tanker.

Another vector and more traffic off the nose. It was getting light out and we could see it was a 707 with wingtip drogues. We had seen the same guy the night before.

"Tanker in sight," we called. We were barely above bingo. The tanker asked our position and we told him we were joining up. We plugged easily on the left wingtip station, got a green light, but no flow, then a flashing red light. We pulled out and tried again with the same results. About that time we heard our tanker call, "Ironclaw, say your position." What did he mean?

"We're joined on you now."

Silence, then "Negative, no one is joined on us." Oh, great. We pulled off, now below bingo.

"OK, we need a good vector," we called. "We need gas now." This time we saw two large jets and turned toward them. "Tanker, understand you're a flight of two?"

"Negative, we're single." Here we go again," I thought. "Where is this guy? We heard the E-2 trying to coordinate with the tanker as we stared at our fuel gauge, now showing well below bingo and dropping. Finally, radar contact.

Squawking emergency worked as advertised and we had a good vector.

"OK, he's coming right at us. Tally. This is definitely him."

A few minutes to rendezvous and we were down to 1,000 pounds. We selected our wing dumps so all the fuel would go into the fuselage. We plugged and waited for flow.

"Anything?" I asked.

"No, not yet," the pilot replied. I couldn't believe it!

We pulled out and tried again after they recycled the boom. Nothing! Now we had 900 pounds. ECMO 3 said, "If this thing flames out, we're ready back here for you to blow the canopies. The reality of a possible ejection finally set in.

"We're still not showing any flow."

The tanker knew we needed help immediately.

"Something must have come unseated," he called, "We have good indications but still no flow. Try again, but this time, hit the basket hard." We came in with more than the recommended five knots of closure and it worked. We were staring at 600 pounds when the needle jumped up.

"Good flow, we've got good flow." Four sighs of relief.

"Roger, Prowler, how much do you need?"

"As much as you can give us." Our return to the boat was very quiet as we all considered what almost happened, the mistakes we made and the options we passed up. We were an experienced crew and each one of us should have known better than to get caught. We've all heard that "bingo is bingo" and for a reason. Good crew coordination and a little common sense would have prevented this entire incident.

Lt. Selnick is an ECMO with VAQ-136.

37

... "Ironclaw, say your position."

"We're joined on you now." Silence, then "Negative, no one is joined on us".

Lt. Selnick is an ECMO with VAQ-136.





# Night

## No-

## Flapper

By Lt. Mike McMahon

As I slowed my Viking to "dirty at eight," I realized for the first time that it was absolutely pitch black outside my airplane. I was glad I had been airborne in the dark so long; my scan was warmed up and I was psyching myself for that okie-dokie.

It was a month into my first cruise and I had been flying the ball pretty well. I had high hopes of busting into the Top 10 for the first line period. I was flying another long, night borex off the coast of Hawaii, and all I could think about was how much an OK pass would help me get that Top Ten patch.

As I slowed my Viking to "dirty at eight," I realized for the first time that it was absolutely pitch black outside my airplane. I was glad I had been airborne in the dark so long; my scan was warmed up and I was psyching myself for that okie-dokie.

I felt sharper than a tack at eight miles when I was surprised to see a TE FLAPS LKD light during my dirty-up. The trailing-edge flaps were locked full-up on the gauge.

"No problem," I thought. I immediately told my COTAC to let CATCC know we needed to discontinue our approach and proceed overhead to dump and talk to a Viking rep. "Boy, am I on top of things tonight."

Nothing unexpected from the tower rep. Following NATOPS, I began to dump down to no-flap max-trap weight. I started thinking about how easy it would be to fly the ball at the higher approach speed. Just fly the ball with the nose, piece of cake. A little sympathy from the LSOs guaranteed me an OK.

After dumping down and reading the PCL, we were ready to come aboard. Since I was now the last plane airborne on this event, I was quickly vectored to final. Everything was happening a lot faster than the usual since my approach speed was now 148 KIAS instead of the normal 116 KIAS. I still felt like I was way ahead of the airplane and I was intent on flying a perfect no-flapper.

As I pushed over at three miles, I saw that a 1,200-fpm rate of descent would keep me on glideslope instead of the normal 500 fpm. Shortly after that, someone's mike stuck on one of the two frequencies we had in our radios and we couldn't change it because our IRC (integrated radio control) box had frozen. I thought CATCC was stuck-MIC on our approach frequency so I kept broadcasting "stuck MIC" on that radio while I pressed on with the approach.

The noise was very distracting but I could hack it. I just concentrated on the needles. All things considered, I was flying a rails CCA, but boy, was it happening fast.

When I heard a garbled "three-quarters of a mile. Call the ball," my COTAC called the ball and I heard the garbled "Roger ball, no flaps." At that time, I peeked out at the ship to check my lineup and went right back to my needles for another look. Everything looked great!

I couldn't fly anything but an OK tonight. Then, when I looked back out at the ship inside one-half mile, the picture was all wrong. I was lined up well right of centerline with about 10 degrees of crossing angles! It looked like I was going to land on a Tomcat and continue on into the island.



Lt. Steve Whitaker

The noise was very distracting but I could hack it. I just concentrated on the needles. All things considered, I was flying a rails CCA, but boy, was it happening fast.

The first thing I thought of was Dorothy, Toto and Kansas. Then I reacted to try to get back toward centerline. The correction to the left made the crossing angles worse so I knew I'd need a healthy re-correction. I still had trouble hearing, and I fully expected the red waveoff lights. I hesitated for a second, looking for the waveoff lights, then went to full power as I tried to take my own waveoff.

As I crossed the ramp at military power with my aircraft pointed at the Fresnel lens, I dipped my right wing to slow the crossing rate. I was almost positive that my wing tip was going to hit something on the foul line. I just wasn't sure which wing tip it would be.

Amazingly enough, I caught a 3-wire on the fly and didn't hit anything, although I rolled out just six inches from the port catwalk. Of course, I got yelled at for "lights on deck" as I sat in the wires, at military, trying to figure out whether I was still alive.

Only after I reviewed the PLAT tape several times with the CAG LSO was I able to figure out what had happened. First, the stuck mike was our own UHF-2, not on the approach frequency as I thought. Second, my lineup problem was caused by a rolling deck in heavy seas which was only noticeable on the PLAT tape by referencing the plane guard ship as it shot from one side of the picture to the other and back again. The higher, no-flap approach speed exacerbated the lineup problem and made the correction that much

harder.

Third, the LSOs gave me power calls that I thought I heard, but they never gave me a lineup call. They, too, were fooled by the lack of a visible horizon. Finally, even though I was at military power and maintained the landing attitude, my attempted waveoff was obviously too late.

I learned a few lessons. Don't come aboard until you and your aircraft are ready. The stuck mike and the stuck IRC, which prevented us from de-selecting the stuck mike, were distracting enough to make us discontinue our approach.

Landing configurations other than normal should never be taken lightly. Consider all of the associated flight characteristics that go along with a given configuration, and how they will affect your approach and landing. My self-initiated waveoff was hindered by less lift over the wings (no flaps), increased rate-of-descent (1,200 fpm and higher approach speed), and large wing dips (lineup corrections).

Don't hesitate to take your own waveoff if you are not comfortable with your approach. The longer you wait, the less able you'll be to accomplish it safely.

The pilot always has the responsibility to keep his plane on glideslope and on centerline. The fact that the LSOs did not give me a lineup call did not relieve me of my responsibility of correcting for lineup.

Lt. McMahon is an S-3 pilot and senior LSO for VS-21.

SEP 27 1991  
 LSO  
 U.S. DOCUMENT  
 RECEIVED DEPOSITORY

# Career Planning: From Paddles To Fuels Officer

By Lt. Timmy Smith

40

*Three* months into WESTPAC and another dark night on Gonzo Station. Our LSO team had been together for some time and was working well. A quick stop at CATCC before the recovery revealed a lineup that included a couple of new guys who might need special attention. As team leader, I didn't think there would be any problem as we reported to primary that we were manned and ready.

The first jet set the stage for the recovery with a long, ugly bolter. My warm, fuzzy feeling slowly deteriorated, and halfway through the Tomcats, I realized this was my night in the barrel. To this day, I still haven't decided which is more painful, waving or flying inside the barrel.

"204, on course, below glidepath, three-quarters of a mile. Call the ball."

"204, Tomcat, ball, 7.4."

"Roger, ball. You're low. Winds 30 knots, axial."

With a power call, the F-14 was on glidepath, on centerline, though drifting a little right in the middle. He had avoided the typical over-correction of flying through the glidepath. Then, to make things interesting, the PLAT rolled over and died.

As my scan went completely to the

F-14, I saw a left wing dip correction for lineup. It wasn't until in close at the ramp that a significant left drift became evident.

We all screamed, "Right for lineup!" including the phone talker, as a red wingtip light seemed to go over our heads.

The Tomcat trapped. The silence on the platform was broken by the 5MC: "Pull the 3-wire." Then a phone call from the tower invited us up for a little chat after the recovery. The F-14 had landed 30 feet to the left with a left-to-right drift.

We had a series of very one-sided conversations with the captain, CAG, Boss, and the Tomcat driver's skipper. CAG paddles mumbled something about his career and fuels officer. It was time for reflection over a cigarette and a glass of nuclear milk. By the way, I don't smoke and despise UHT milk.

Thank goodness for Nimitz-class carriers. A large deck saved us, but at the same time, it contributed to the incident because the LSOs couldn't accurately perceive lineup at night without the aid

of the PLAT.

The pilot must correct for lineup all the way to touchdown. The F-14 driver was one of the newly arrived nuggets I had noted in CATCC and he had failed to recognize the left drift induced by the combination of axial winds and his lineup correction.

Scan breakdown and fixation occur more often than not in close, where everyone—pilot and LSO—is overloaded. You can't count on paddles to keep you on centerline. He may be behind the power curve because of circumstances beyond even his control.

Pretty big excuse matrix, huh? It could get much larger. But when it comes down to it, I had to be accountable.

When LSOs gather, you'll hear talk like, "Don't take trash," or "I wouldn't have taken him that close."

Which one of us hasn't fallen prey to the old get-him-aboard-paddles mandate that lurks in our brains? Besides, talk is cheap until it's your turn. I should have waved him off. ◀

Lt. Smith was a wing-qualified LSO with VS-33. He is now assigned to VT-21.

Peter Mersky





MOOCH WITH HELP FROM FLEA PRESENTS:

# BROWNSHOES



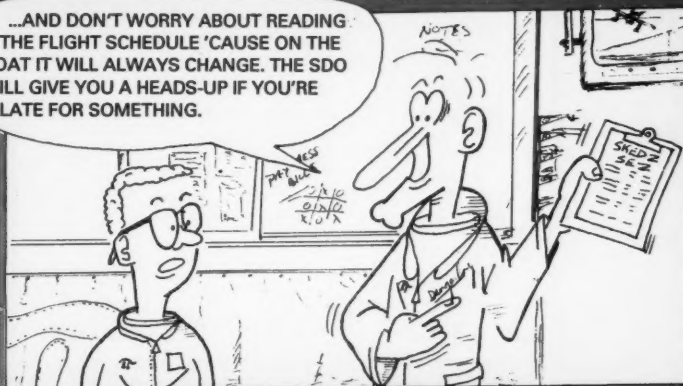
## ACTION COMIX

"The kind real aviators like"

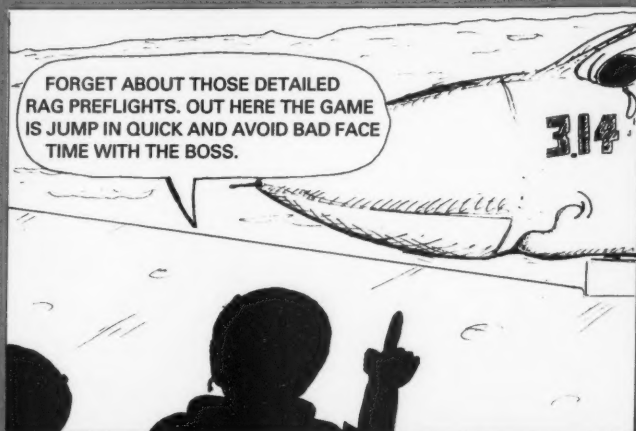
By Lt. Ward Carroll

DANGERBOY GIVES THE NEWEST MEMBER OF VF-3.14 THE ADVANTAGE OF FLEET SAAVY...

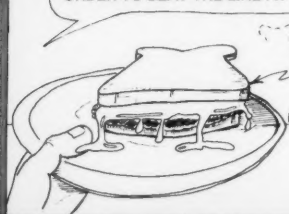
...AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT READING THE FLIGHT SCHEDULE 'CAUSE ON THE BOAT IT WILL ALWAYS CHANGE. THE SDO WILL GIVE YOU A HEADS-UP IF YOU'RE LATE FOR SOMETHING.



FORGET ABOUT THOSE DETAILED RAG PREFLIGHTS. OUT HERE THE GAME IS JUMP IN QUICK AND AVOID BAD FACE TIME WITH THE BOSS.



THE LAST EVENT NEVER DEBRIEFS IN ORDER TO BEAT THE LINE AT MIDRATS.



© REAL McCOY®  
SINGLE CHEESE  
SLIDER ON  
TOASTED BREAD.

